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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Philosophy and Politics...

A Study Of Plato's Erastai

by

Roderick J. Williams

(C)

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER of ARTS

Department of Political Science

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1987

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the School of Graduate Studies, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Philosophy and Politics...

A Study Of Plato's Erastai

submitted by Roderick J. Williams in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER of ARTS.

.....

Supervisor

.....

.....

Date August 24, 1987

To my parents

Abstract

Plato's Erastai comes down through the tradition as the dialogue "On Philosophy." In recent times, however, this little dialogue has been maligned and thus neglected because there is a prevailing sentiment that it is spurious. It is a peculiarly strange and paradoxical dialogue. The following discussion attempts to explicate in the form of a commentary both why this is the Platonic dialogue on philosophy, and to examine why Socrates, by his example, transformed philosophy into "political" philosophy. The dialogue thus directly considers Socrates' historic "turn" which forced philosophy to attend to the questions of greatest human importance, and to have her present herself in a politic way. This thesis, then, attempts to illuminate "political" philosophy as it originated in the thought of Socrates, as well as interpreting the dialogue itself.

Acknowledgements

I have received tremendous help in bringing this thesis to fruition. I first of all want to thank my parents, Bill and Lorraine Williams, and my grandparents, Annie and Dan Melnyk, and Helen Williams, who have always given me so much and have received so little in return. To Professors Pocklington and Wilson I would like to extend my deepest appreciation for making the time to read carefully my thesis. My friends Dan Gallagher, Brad Bucknell, Sue Collins, and my fellow students have always been a constant source of support both in actively encouraging me, and in sharing good conversations.

About Heidi Studer I cannot say enough. She has, from the beginning, always been my greatest source of support. Her friendship will always be one of my life's treasures.

Finally, and most especially, my most profound gratitude is to my teacher, Leon Craig. His example has educated me about what it is to be a first-rate teacher and an excellent human being. My memory of these years with him will continue to inspire me and shape my life.

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I. Introduction To A Reading Of Plato's Erastai

What is political philosophy? This perennial question has a special pertinence for us because the status of political philosophy within the contemporary conception of political science has for some time been a matter of dispute. Recent attacks challenge the very possibility of its fulfilling its traditional intention. Political philosophy as we know it, and as it has been carried on for over two millenia, aspires to provide rational guidance about what is noble and good and just in political life. But in an age where a technologically oriented science is the only generally accepted intellectual authority, many are skeptical concerning the possibility of there being a form of political philosophy which supplies rational guidance at once normative and scientific. Believing genuine science to be grounded on a radical distinction between facts and values, political philosophy is often seen today as neither fully rational nor scientific. Suffice it to say, political philosophy has once again become something of questionable repute.

Uncertainty about the credibility of political philosophy invites one to go back to its beginning and see its origin in the thought of Socrates. Socrates is the founder of political philosophy. He "called philosophy down from the heavens and set her in the cities of men and brought her also into their homes and compelled her to ask questions about life and morality and things good and evil."[1] This is Cicero referring to the famous Socratic "turn." We might wonder why Socrates himself turned from the study of heavenly phenomena to the study of political things, and by his example transformed philosophy into political philosophy. What did Socrates see as being the essential purpose of political philosophy?

In the discussion that follows, I shall attempt to show why I believe the origin of political philosophy, and questions about its very character, are powerfully presented in a neglected and maligned Platonic dialogue titled the Erastai.[2] The Erastai is styled as Socrates'

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[1]Cicero, Tusculan Disputations, translated by J.E. King, in the Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann, 1927), V. iv. 10.

[2]In recent times, the question has been raised as to whether this is a genuine Platonic dialogue although nothing conclusive, or even very plausible, has been said in arguing against the dialogue's authenticity. The case is not based on any hard external evidence, but rather, on the merit of the dialogue's content. (See, for example, the introduction by Schleiermacher in Schleiermacher's Introduction To The

narration to an anonymous and an indeterminate audience[3] about an encounter with a pair of young men which occurred in a certain school.[4] The encounter itself was almost exclusively concerned with questions about the character and purpose of philosophy and philosophizing.[5] Socrates begins his narration by considering the possibility that natural philosophy is great and noble. He apparently concludes the discussion by implying that the philosopher's first order of business is to be political, both in the sense of attending to things of greatest human importance, and in the sense of always pursuing wisdom in a "politic" way.

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[2](cont'd) Dialogue's of Plato, translated by W. Dobson, (Cambridge: J. &J.J. Deighton, 1836), or Paul Shorey's discussion of the dialogue in his book What Plato Said, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933.) The following discussion is enough indication that I do not agree with their presumptions about whether the dialogue is worth anyone's care and time.

There is, however, a more important point of uncertainty about the dialogue's title. For my own discussion, I rely upon James Leake's unpublished translation of the dialogue because of its apparent literalness. Leake explains his choice of title by saying "The title Lovers (Erastai) appears in all the major manuscripts BTDW. Some editors follow a marginal correction of B which reads Rivals (Anterastai), perhaps because that is how the dialogue is titled in Diogenes Laertius' list of genuine Platonic dialogues." See Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers, translated by R.D. Hicks, (London: William Heinemann, 1925), Vol.I., p. 231.

The word erastai, (lovers, from eros, love) has the meaning of "ones who long for, desire" whereas anterastai (rivals) has the meaning of "rivals in love." See Liddell and Scott, Oxford Greek Lexicon, Abridged, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1982).

[3]The Erastai is one of only four dialogues narrated from beginning to end by Socrates, the others being the Republic, the dialogue "On The Just," the Charmides, the dialogue "On Moderation," and the Lysis, the dialogue "On Friendship." This may suggest a special relationship between these four dialogues. The Erastai presents an occasion on which Socrates, apparently on his own volition, gives an account of a significant episode of his own life to an audience apparently familiar with philosophy and friendly towards it. In contrast, the Apology, for example, presents an occasion on which Socrates is compelled to publicly defend his way of life in front of a mostly hostile audience (see Christopher Bruell, "On The Original Meaning of Political Philosophy: An Interpretation of Plato's Lovers," typescript of an unpublished manuscript, p. 2-3, also note 2).

[4]Tense is very important in this dialogue which has Socrates recounting a past experience. We are invited to reflect upon Socrates' narration of a past encounter in light of how Socrates describes it to his audience. Socrates' audience sees the encounter through his eyes; we see both the original encounter and Socrates' narration of it through his eyes. Unlike Socrates' audience, however, we have the benefit of being able to comb through this discussion over and over again and reflect on all of its subtle twists and nuances.

[5]The dialogue has come down to us through the tradition with the subtitle "On Philosophy." This subtitle is not likely Plato's but probably was added by later commentators. However, this actually reveals the commentators' insight for the subtitle is supported by the dialogue's content.

The Erastai is a Socratic introduction to political philosophy.

Questions about the character and purpose of political philosophizing are politically significant because the consequences of such philosophizing may well have far-reaching effects.[6] But today there is a skepticism if not total cynicism about whether political philosophy can provide the means to reasonably account for the ends of human life.[7] The skepticism is rooted in the belief that there is no rational standard of judgment to which one can appeal. As noted above, this skepticism is connected with modern science, which, as a matter of principle, does not seek to provide answers about what is good or noble or just, such ideas being implicitly seen as nothing more than rationalizations justifying the conventions of this or that time and place. Needless to say, science tacitly exempts itself: it presumes (scientific) knowledge is good, that the pursuit of it is noble, and that its fruits will be employed justly. Complementing the anti-teleological character of our natural science, the dominant schools of social science contend that human life varies so significantly with time and place that it is unreasonable to posit a purposeful end for a human being, per se. Accordingly, there is no human virtue as such, nor universally valid morality, nor simply best regime. Insofar as political philosophy presumed the contrary, it was guided by the chimerical.[8]

Yet we know from experience that certain things are simply good for us. For example, no sane adult seriously doubts that "good health" is something both real and rationally explicable, and that there is a natural standard for it. Good health, then, is neither utterly subjective nor radically relative. We also have the power to recognize when we or others suffer from poor health, even though we generally have great difficulty in understanding what precisely comprises comprehensive health, much less how its best produced, maintained, or

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[6]The thorough development of this point is neither the intention of this thesis nor is it within its scope. One is asked only to consider the effects of ideas as presented by, say, Aristophanes, Xenophon, Plato, Machiavelli, Bacon, Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx, and Nietzsche. Essentially the contention is that ideas do powerfully influence, if not govern, the way most all men live.

[7]See Leo Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy" in What Is Political Philosophy And Other Studies, (Glencoe: The Free Press of Glencoe Illinois, 1959), p. 17.

[8]See David Lowenthal, "The Case for Teleology," in The Independent Journal of Philosophy, (Vienna, Austria), Vol. II, 1978, p. 95.

restored. In other words, with regard to questions about what is good, beginning with questions about good health, we often know too much to be so skeptical and we generally do not know nearly enough to be cynical.

Political philosophy can be said to emerge naturally when a comparison is made between contrasting ways of life. Such contrasts naturally motivate one to wonder which way is best, or to wonder whether there is a best way. However, this conceals a prior question: what accounts for a profound dissatisfaction with the presumption that one is living the best way of life? One pre-disposed to philosophize should be expected to account for his own motivations, for philosophy purports to account for all things significant to human beings: surely this includes philosophy itself. One who philosophizes desires to become wise about such things, this being implicit in what it means to love wisdom. Among other things, then, philosophy must account for its own activity.[9]

With this in mind, we turn to the Erastai wherein fundamental questions such as these about philosophy are addressed and illuminated, even if they are not conclusively resolved. It is possible that Socrates' teaching, were one able to discern it clearly, is simply true, and thus potentially beneficial for people regardless of time and place. But be that as it may, it is reasonable to presume that our first task should be to attempt to understand the author as he understood himself. Plato's text and its meaning are what is important for us in this endeavour.

The Erastai, to repeat, recounts Socrates speaking with two young lovers about the character of political philosophy and its purpose. As the subsequent commentary will attempt

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[9]See Alexandre Kojeve, Introduction To The Reading Of Hegel, Lectures On The Phenomenology Of Spirit, Assembled by Raymond Queneau, Edited by Allan Bloom, Translated by James H. Nichols Jr., (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1969) in Editor's Introduction, p. IX, where he comments on the philosopher's primary task: "...for Hegel the primary concern is not the knowledge of anything outside of himself, that is, knowledge of what the philosopher is and how he can know what he knows. The philosopher must be able to explain his own doings; an explanation of the heavens, of animals, or of nonphilosophic men which does not leave room for, or does not talk about, the philosopher is radically incomplete because it cannot account for the possibility of its own existence as knowledge. The world known by philosophy must be such that it supports philosophy and makes the philosopher the highest or most complete kind of human being."

to make clear, it is a particularly strange and paradoxical dialogue. And because it is such a short dialogue, in fact the second shortest in the entire corpus (only the Cleitophon is shorter), one might reasonably ask whether it would be more fruitful to seek answers to philosophic questions in certain larger, more famous dialogues. The underlying assumption of this question, I suspect, concerns the value of reading any of the shorter Platonic dialogues with an eye towards answering anything important. In response, I cannot do better than point the reader to an essay written by Allan Bloom, who directly addresses this issue. Bloom's response is worth quoting at length for it provokes one to further consider this question and it will help launch my own discussion. He begins by observing:

> In an age in which not only the alternatives of action but also those of thought have become peculiarly impoverished, it behooves us to search for the lost, profound possibilities of human life. We are in need of a comprehensive reflection on the ends of politics, but we are confronted with a host of objections which make that enterprise seem impossible. A return to the origins of political philosophy -- that is, a return to Socrates -- is requisite, if we are to clarify the nature of political philosophy and elaborate its intention and possibility. This attempt to recapture the original project of the political philosopher is a difficult one because we are searching without quite knowing what we are searching for; hence it is hard to know when we have found it. The best beginning is to focus our attention and efforts on those works which have least in common with our mode of treating problems and which were once taken seriously by serious men but are hard for us to take seriously. Writers like Isocrates and Xenophon have fallen into disfavor; but it is precisely from their rhetoric and restraint that we could learn of the taste of Thucydides and Plato and of the capital importance of the virtue of moderation in the political thought of the ancient writers. When we do not understand Isocrates and Xenophon, we do not understand Thucydides and Plato. We see in these latter concerns of our own, and they lose their liberating effect. Our horizon is protected from attack by a habit of not noticing what is not comprehended by it.[10]

Bloom goes on to observe that what is unknown and important takes on the guise of the commonplace or trivial for us. This may even be a problem when we read these larger, more famous dialogues: we may believe we already understand them, but as Bloom goes on to say, we often do so without knowing why we believe this to be so. He recommends we read the shorter dialogues, especially those which are unfamiliar to us, as a corrective for our short-sightedness:

> One of the best antidotes for this kind of myopia is the study of the smaller Platonic dialogues. They are short, which in one sense makes them easier; for it is almost impossible to devote the appropriate attention to every line, every word of a

[10]Allan Bloom, "Political Philosophy in Democracy: An Interpretation of Plato's Hipparchus, in Melanges Raymond Aron, (Paris: Kalmann Levy, 1970), p. 147.

> book the length of the Laws; our eye skips over what ought to be perplexing; time does not permit the attention to the incredibly elaborate detail nor are our intelligences ordinarily competent to the survey of such a large, complex whole. A dialogue which is a few pages long permits one to wonder over every detail, to ask innumerable questions of the text, to use on it every resource of intellect, passion and imagination. In another sense, though, these small dialogues are much more difficult, for they are so strange. With the Republic, for example, a long tradition of philosophy tells us what the issues are; we know that the question is justice and the best regime. When we read the sections on the good and knowledge, we feel at home because we see them as parts of a great discussion which has been going on in Western thought for two and a half millenia, a discussion participated in by Locke, Kant and Nietzsche, who use the same terms as does Plato. This sense of familiarity may be spurious; we may be reading the text as seen by the tradition rather than raising Plato's own questions, interpreting all the foreign elements in the book in light of questions posed to it by later thinkers. This is, of course, the danger; for if we cannot understand dialogues which do not contain the well-known themes, it means that we do not know what Plato was about or what the dialogue form is and means. Still and all, we do feel at home in the big, famous dialogues. But when we come to a dialogue like the Ion, what are we supposed to say about Socrates' meeting with a stupid reciter of the Homeric poems whom Socrates treats like an oracle, to whom he attributes divine inspiration and who, at the end, in desperation at his incapacity to define himself in the face of Socrates' sophistic arguments, insists that he is Greece's greatest general? It all seems too mad. What is the philosophic significance of all this? Each of the smaller dialogues has this strange character.[11]

Because these smaller dialogues have this strange character and are, for the most part, uncharted territory, the scholarly reaction to such curious works has been to ignore them, preferring to consider them spurious. The scholars presume Socrates would never have engaged in such discussions nor would have Plato imitated them; if they are treated seriously at all today, it is as logical exercises, propedeutic to real philosophy. Bloom, though, argues that the shorter dialogues are worthy of attention on their own merit:

> I would suggest that the big dialogues cannot be understood without understanding the little ones first, for the former are responses to problems elaborated in the latter, responses which only become meaningful against the background of those problems. Plato was more interested in posing the proper questions than in providing the answers. Perhaps the most important question of all is what is philosophy, how is it possible and why is it necessary? Philosophy emerges late in human history; it was still new in Socrates' time. It was not coeval with man as families, cities and the useful arts seem to be. It could not be taken for granted. It also was suspected, ridiculed and hated. It not only had to constitute itself; it had to defend itself. The little dialogues characterize Socrates', and hence philosophy's, confrontation with the opinions or conventions out of which philosophy emerged, the confrontation with the authoritative views of the pious, the poets, the statesmen, the people at large, etc.[12] In other words, these dialogues sketch out the images on the wall of the cave, reveal

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[11]Ibid., p. 147-148.

[12]Bloom's comment here about the little dialogues characterizing Socrates' activity reminds one of Xenophon's Recollections. In the Recollections, Xenophon recounts various incidents of Socrates' life and presents them in a number of shorter dialogues. Each dialogue is complete as it reveals a particular question and provides

> their inadequacy and point toward the road upward; they present the first, the common sense horizon of man, the horizon which must be transcended, but which must first be known in order to be transcended. Every explanation of the world presupposes a rich apprehension of the phenomena of the world; otherwise that explanation will be as impoverished as is the awareness which it seeks to clarify. Plato elaborates the common sense horizon in the little dialogues. Each of the interlocutors represents an archetypical prejudice. Their arguments are always poor, but they are poor because something in their souls attaches them to falsehood. Thus, if we see the reasons for the poor arguments, we learn of the complexity of the soul as well as the various views of what is most important to believe and know. These dialogues canvass the types of human soul and the most powerful pre-philosophic opinions about the true and the good. They appear mad, because the common sense of this world is always somehow self-contradictory or askew; if pushed to its conclusion it leads to absurdity in thought and action, and it is precisely this character of common sense that necessitates philosophy and makes its emergence difficult. Philosophy, unlike the prejudices it seeks to replace, must be aware of its origins and its reason for being. The smaller dialogues are necessary to us because they unambiguously force us to learn Plato's mode of interpretation of the world and because they are almost indispensable aids to the enrichment of our consciousness so vital to any non-abstract pursuit of clarity about the most important questions.[13]

Bloom's comment on the shorter dialogues suggests there are many worlds to explore in Plato's cosmos, worlds which, if explored, promise to help us understand what Plato said, why he said it, and, perhaps, bring us closer to his thought. The Erastai is one of these strange and mostly unfamiliar worlds. It is the Platonic dialogue which is devoted exclusively to a thematic discussion of philosophy. It therefore promises a glimpse of what Socrates understood the task of philosophy to be and why he thought it necessary to set her in the cities and involve her in the affairs of politics. According to Cicero, this was the beginning of political philosophy. The Erastai invites us to go back and see the origin of political philosophy in the thought of Socrates.

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[12](cont'd) the means to answer it; but the same question reveals the dialogue's incompleteness by raising a further question: what is its place in light of the whole? Each of Xenophon's little dialogues is a part of the larger text, which one suspects has an inner coherence of its own. One also suspects that the text's inner coherence is the embracive architecture which determines the shape of all its parts. In the Recollections, Socrates is displayed in discussion with human beings from many walks of life. There is no extended discussion of the good, the noble, or the just. Nor is there any extended discussion on philosophizing. Xenophon, however, tacitly invites his reader to focus on the philosopher's (Socrates') activity and on the people with whom he associates in order to glean what philosophizing is. Xenophon, Memorabilia et. al., Translated by E.C. Marchant and O.J. Todd, (London: William Heinemann Ltd.).

[13]Bloom, "Political Philosophy in Democracy," p. 148-149.

II. Prelude (132a-d6)

A. Setting The Stage

The dialogue begins with Socrates narrating an encounter he had about the purpose and character of philosophy to an anonymous audience apparently already familiar with, and presumably interested in, philosophy. It is not immediately clear, however, whether this familiarity is more than superficial, nor whether the audience is familiar with the kind of philosophy Socrates has in mind.

Socrates begins the narration by saying he entered the place of Dionysius the school teacher. There he saw "those of the young who are reputed to be most remarkable for their looks and the good repute of their fathers." He immediately adds that he also saw their lovers. Two of the young boys were involved in a dispute and were taking it quite seriously. Although Socrates did not hear the exact subject of their dispute, it appeared to him that the two boys were disputing either about Anaxagoras or Oinopides, two philosophers of nature (rather, that is, than of political things). Each of these "pre-Socratic" philosophers was accomplished in geometry and famous for speculations about the heavens. Socrates inferred the dispute was about something geometrical because the two boys appeared to be describing circles and were "imitating" ecliptics with their hands. Socrates, who was now seated close to someone whom he identifies as being a lover of one of the two boys, nudged him with his elbow and asked what the two boys were so serious about, adding, "Presumably it is something great and noble on which the two have bestowed such great seriousness." In response to Socrates' initial observation, the resulting discussion soon becomes almost exclusively concerned with questioning the nobility and utility of philosophizing.

Exactly when this encounter occurred is not readily apparent, nor for that matter, are we ever provided with any concrete evidence as to when (or where) Socrates' subsequent narration of it took place. The ambiguity regarding the setting and timing of both the original encounter and the narration of it causes one to wonder whether Plato, who surely could have supplied such information, means to attribute an inherent sense of timelessness to this

discussion about philosophy.

Socrates reveals very little either explicitly or implicitly about the setting for this encounter other than that it occurred in the place of Dionysius who is simply identified as "the school teacher." The place of Dionysius, then, would appear to be a school where certain young boys from the city are educated, although it may be worth noting that Socrates never explicitly says this is where the boys receive a proper education. He simply identifies the teacher and the school's usual clientele, i.e., the young "reputed to be most remarkable for their looks and the good repute of their fathers," and he adds that lovers of the boys also attended the school. Socrates does not tell us why he went into the school although it would seem he did so on his own volition.

It is curious that Socrates makes sure that his audience knows the name of the school-master, Dionysius, and then says nothing more about him. Socrates' silence about Dionysius, however, raises some other questions. There is no decisive evidence to suggest Dionysius was actually present in the school, although this would seem to be the most reasonable assumption. Socrates never clarifies his relation to this Dionysius, or whether there is a relation. Socrates, though, does suggest that these youths stand in a special relation to Dionysius: he is their teacher. Beyond that, we may surmise 1) Dionysius, if present, allowed the boys to dispute about natural philosophy, or more precisely, about things in the heavens; 2) Dionysius himself may have been teaching theories about natural philosophy; 3) If so, Socrates may not have been the only one who could have been accused of corrupting the youth, that is, if speculations about things in the heavens qualifies as something potentially corrupting (Apology, 26d) However, we never do see Dionysius in the role of the teacher; and Dionysius does not greet Socrates when he entered the school, and nor for that matter, does Socrates seem concerned to find him.

After all, Socrates may go into the school not to observe Dionysius but because it was reputed to be filled with young boys "remarkable for their looks." Presumably the word 'looks' refers immediately to the boys' attractive physical appearance, as judged by conventional conceptions of beauty. However, the word 'looks' invites us to consider that it

might mean something more than physical beauty.[14] Among other things, one should consider whether there might be a relation between the outside and the inside of a human being. In any case, these attractive boys may attend this particular school because of its reputation as the school for the young and the beautiful of politically well-established families. Socrates, then, may enter the school because he was enticed by the prospect of seeing and being with (literally "having intercourse with") the young, beautiful, and the potentially powerful.[15] Socrates, then, does allow us to conclude more about Dionysius than his name, though the name itself may have some implications.[16]

It is surprising, then, that the entirety of Socrates' discussion was with two young lovers, who, like Socrates, were merely in the school observing one of the beloved boys. We never do hear either of the two boys speak, and the little we come to know of them is based upon Socrates' narrative descriptions of them, including his reports of their reactions to the philosopher's conversation with the lovers.

What first catches Socrates' attention is that two of the boys "happened to be disputing." He recounts that he was uncertain about the exact subject of their dispute, but he does not question or otherwise interfere with it. Even though it appeared the two boys were arguing about "philosophical" things, their fathers had not sent them to be educated by Socrates. The fathers of "good repute" had entrusted their boys to Dionysius; and, given their high standing in the city, would no doubt have intended the boys' education to help prepare them for prominent political roles later in life. Presumably, that is, these fathers would want

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[14]The translator notes that "looks" ("appearance," ten idean) is the same word used for the "forms" or "ideas" in Plato's account of how we know and how things are ordered. See Republic 479a, 486d, 507b. Plato, Republic, Translated, with notes and an Interpretive Essay by Allan Bloom, (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1968.) Subsequent references to the Republic are taken from the Bloom edition. It is curious that the same word used by Plato for the highest metaphysical realities is a word which is closely tied to ordinary conceptions of everyday appearance, i.e., opinion.

[15]The prospect of this is all the more interesting because Socrates never does speak directly with the two young and beautiful boys. The mere mention of the "young and beautiful" (133a4) cannot help but remind one of Plato's Second Letter where he talks of a Socrates which he has made "young and beautiful" (314c).

[16]According to Diogenes Laertius, Plato as a boy had a teacher of this name. Lives of the Eminent Philosophers, p.279.

their boys to be educated in the "right" school. One might further presume the boys' behaviour would have been affected by the immediate presence of their lovers. Be that as it may, it's clear that the presence of the boys affected their lovers' behaviour in the discussion occasioned by the boys' dispute.

Socrates begins his narration by confessing his uncertainty concerning the subject of the boys' dispute while nonetheless revealing the basis of his conjecture about it: he tacitly contrasts what he actually saw with what he did not "plainly hear." He inferred that it was about either Anaxagoras or Oinopides because the boys were apparently describing (graphein) geometrical shapes with their hands to illustrate some point of their dispute. Socrates' mention of these philosophers' names in connection with the boys' dispute suggests that discussion about "natural" philosophy was present prior to his arrival in the school. Having noticed the boys' dispute, Socrates' attention seemed momentarily given over to it, until his question about it which, in turn, gave rise to another dispute, this time about philosophizing as such.

It could be said, then, that natural philosophy remains in the dialogue insofar as the boys' dispute is the cause of the subsequent discussion about whether it is noble to philosophize. Although natural philosophy seems utterly supplanted by Socrates' eventual introduction of political philosophy, the dialogue leaves open the question about whether the study of nature is noble.

That this dialogue on philosophy virtually begins with a dispute about philosophy may be intended to suggest a necessary connection between philosophy and controversy. Perhaps disputes are simply intrinsic to philosophy; and this itself may render philosophizing as such controversial: some may despise it simply because it seems never to arrive at clear and universally compelling conclusions. The natural connection between philosophy and controversy may remain so long as there is love of wisdom (philo sophia) rather than wisdom (sophia). The possession of absolute wisdom would entail complete knowledge of all things that can be known by a human being and thus may even be the end of one's philosophizing -- the truly wise man would be utterly self-sufficient, and like a God, he would rest.

Philosophizing, however, would seem to be a ceaseless and passionate activity.

We now turn to a feature of the narration that is more difficult to explain, and which is perhaps the most arresting peculiarity of Socrates' narrative: he withholds the names of everyone in the discussion except himself. This anonymity pervades the dialogue, for we never do find out the names of either the boys or the lovers. There are various possible reasons for the anonymity of the boys and the lovers. Given the controversial reputation of philosophy, it is possible that Socrates politely withholds names from his audience to protect the identity of those whom he either spoke with, or in front of.[17] Yet we still would have to account for why Socrates never identifies his companion (or companions) to whom he narrates this encounter. Given that Socrates' audience seems friendly toward philosophy, and toward Socrates, it seems unlikely that Socrates would withhold names to protect either the identity of the boys' families or the lovers. Moreover, if Socrates had withheld names to protect the dialogue's participants from political reprisal, one would think that the identity to be protected would be the boys' educator, Dionysius. Why then does Socrates name only the teacher?

Socrates may not know, or care to know, the names of the boys or their lovers. He may think their actual identities are unimportant. It therefore is plausible that Socrates has no overtly political reason for withholding their names; and all that may be philosophically relevant, moreover, is the generic descriptions of the participants. It may be that the two young boys who are attracted to philosophy, and the two respective lovers, are themselves representative of an eternal facet of philosophy that Socrates shall illuminate in the subsequent discussion (see, for example, 133a4). If so, it may be important that we know only as much as we see revealed in their discussion about philosophy. To know anything else about their actual identities might distract us from what is truly important to their roles in the Erastai.

Socrates not only withholds names but we also see Socrates withhold from the lover he first questioned his conjecture about the dispute. He volunteers only that it must be

[17] Cf. Thomas Taylor and Floyer Sydenham, The Works of Plato, (London: Printed for Thomas Taylor by R. Wilks, 1804) p 379. Thomas Taylor speculates that the reason why Socrates withholds names is to protect the identity of those he spoke with.

"something great and noble." He may do this out of a reluctance to publicly praise the "study" of Anaxagoras or Oinopides, and rather, to be seen as praising the activities of thinking and discussing. By doing so, Socrates may be testing the reactions of the lover, who may be of an age more attractive to Socrates, and who we find out isn't particularly pious (he does not object to their "babbling" on that ground). Socrates' inference about the dispute reveals that he was familiar with the teachings of certain pre-Socratic philosophers, and that he presumes the auditors of his narration are as well. He does not, however, explicitly reveal his familiarity with these teachings to those in the school.

Socrates' inference that the dispute is of an astronomical/philosophical nature is derived from his seeing the boys using certain geometrical shapes. He thus links geometry (or more generally, mathematics) with the study of natural philosophy. Socrates' linking of geometry and philosophy at the outset would seem to suggest geometry is necessarily prior to making speculations about the heavens.[11]

Having identified certain features about the setting which Socrates chooses to reveal, one is left with questions about their relevance. Exactly who is Dionysius and why is it important we know the name of this schoolmaster, given that he does not participate? What brings Socrates next to the lover of one of the two boys? Why does he initiate a conversation with him in particular? Why does Socrates choose not to reveal to this lover what he does reveal to his audience, namely, what he believed the dispute was about? Socrates' subsequent narration should allow one to resolve these questions. If they remain questions, one's

[11]In the Clouds, the students in Socrates' "Thinkery" make geometric calculations for the purpose of speculating about the heavenly things (1.192-3). Aristophanes, the poet, criticized the philosopher, Socrates, for not understanding the role of eros. Socrates' reliance on geometry, a purely rational activity, prevented him from knowing the different natures of men like Strepsiades or his son Pheidippides. Aristophanes thus invited Socrates to consider the role of eros in terms of giving an account for the whole. Aristophanes sharpened his criticism by pointing out that Socrates' desire for knowledge about the whole was caused his own particularly strong erotic strivings. See Thomas G. West and Grace Starry West, Four Texts On Socrates, (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1984) p. 123. Subsequent references to Aristophanes' Clouds, Plato's Apology and Crito are taken from the West edition. See also Birds, L. 695 ff. in J. P. Maine, The Plays of Aristophanes, (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1949) p. 168. In the Republic, on the other hand, Socrates goes to great lengths to link mathematics and geometry to philosophy (522c ff.).

understanding of the dialogue remains incomplete.

Moreover, since the three things Socrates mentions about the school -- its being under the charge of a certain Dionysius, that the young who attend are reputed to be most remarkable for their looks and the good repute of their fathers, and that lovers of the students sometimes also attend and observe their beloveds -- are never explicitly discussed, one might wonder why they are mentioned at all and what bearing they have on the subsequent discussion. The fact that Socrates is seen speaking in front of the young and their lovers about philosophy's purpose and its character is significant if we bear in mind the eventual prosecution of Socrates by some of the city's fathers for corrupting their sons. Perhaps this dialogue is in some way Plato's response to those accusations. On the other hand, it is possible this dialogue reveals how Socrates may have been responsible for bringing on those accusations.

Socrates displays something of himself in the encounter with the young lovers, and also through his narrative observations to the audience. Socrates' narration includes certain thoughts which were not available to the boys and the lovers. He nowhere makes it clear whether these thoughts occurred to him during or after the encounter. This presents a further complication in our understanding of it; in particular, we cannot be certain when Socrates became aware of the distinctive features of his interlocutors which appear to affect the manner in which he acts (for example, we cannot be sure when Socrates knew that the two young men were lovers of one of the two young boys; or, that one of the young men had spent his time in music while the other had spent his time in athletics). This alerts us to the possibility that Socrates also may conceal certain thoughts from his audience, and therefore, from us. Because he presents a display of himself in dialogue, we have to bear in mind that Socrates may intend a different effect on his audience than on the boys or on the lovers.

We can say that this dialogue is Socrates' recollection of an encounter for the purpose of communicating to his audience something about philosophy which he thought would be important, or at least interesting, for them to know. But it is primarily through the power of one's own imagination that Socrates is seen and heard in dialogue at a school, and in a place

and to an audience wholly unknown to us.

Such observations and questions help prepare one for a more thorough understanding of the Erastai.

B. The Characters

The Two Boys

Socrates' narrative description provides the little we learn about the two boys. The pertinent facts have already been noted, to wit: the boys are young, handsome, and come from families of high standing in the city. From the report of their animated disputing, we may surmise they hold some degree of interest in theoretical things. Their presence clearly had some considerable bearing on the lovers' behaviour and, one suspects, on Socrates' own behaviour as well. The fuller justification for these claims shall be provided in the ensuing discussion but for now I shall flatly assert that one cannot completely understand either Socrates' or the lovers' actions and speeches without one eye on what effect is intended on the two boys. We recall that it was because of the boys' dispute that the encounter between Socrates and the pair of young men occurred. Upon ceasing from their dispute, the two boys become silent except for one notable exception (134b3-4). They become directly, if only passively, involved in this new dispute, apparently forgetting their former concern with geometry and cosmology.

The Two Lovers

Despite considerably more dialogic evidence, a thorough description of the two lovers is similarly impossible. Here, too, we are limited to what Socrates reveals in his narration. Whereas a fuller treatment of their respective natures is properly part of the commentary on their ensuing discussion, what shall be said here at the outset is concerned with illuminating some aspects of the lovers' first speeches, and as well Socrates' introductory descriptions about them. Their initial statements also help to introduce the terms of the ensuing discussion.

The first thing Socrates says about the lovers is that he saw them in the school. In contrast to the boys, Socrates volunteers nothing about either of the lovers' social standing or reputation. Socrates merely says he happened to seat himself next to the lover of one of the boys involved in the dispute. We do not know whether he immediately recognized this lover to be in love with one of the two boys, or, whether he realized this during the subsequent

discussion. Socrates then asked this lover about the subject of the dispute, adding his own observation that it must be about something "great and noble," given the evident seriousness with which it was being pursued. This lover appeared surprised that anyone would believe the dispute to be about something great and noble. He did not hesitate to add that what the two boys were doing was "babbling about the heavenly things and talking nonsense philosophizing." He was the first lover to speak.

This lover's criticism of philosophy was expressed in language distinctly reminiscent of Aristophanes.[19] This may indicate that his view of philosophy is similar to one commonly held in the city, i.e., a view in which philosophy and philosophers and their passion for science are seen as objects of ridicule.[20] At any rate, this lover's opening judgment about philosophizing sets the course for the balance of the discussion. It should be emphasized that it was this lover, and not Socrates, who first explicitly characterized the boys' dispute as a philosophical one. Perhaps one can assume that this initial conception of philosophy expressed by this lover is superficial as well as commonplace.

Socrates says he "marvelled" (or, "wondered") at this answer. He asks the lover whether it seems to him shameful to philosophize; or, if not, why does he speak so harshly. It is worth noting that the lover does not necessarily say he considers philosophizing to be positively shameful but he does regard the boys' dispute to be -- at best -- pointless and nonsensical.

Socrates next informs his listeners that another youth, the first lover's "rival in love," happened to be sitting near. After hearing Socrates' question and the first lover's answer, this

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[19]Clouds 171-173, 188, 193-194, 201, and 227-229; Birds 690-692.

[20]Aristophanes' Clouds shows Socrates' activity to be ridiculous and corrupting. In Plato's Apology, Socrates implies that Aristophanes shaped the view the many hold regarding philosophy, and that Aristophanes' depiction of philosophy is largely responsible for his being brought to trial (Apology, 18d, 19b-c), and for the reputation philosophy has within the city. A surface reading of the Clouds supports Socrates' claim. A careful reading, however, reveals the "old quarrel" (See Republic, 607b) between poetry and philosophy. Aristophanes did not consider philosophy to be simply ridiculous. On the other hand, Socrates' public defence (Apology) addresses his most "dangerous accuser" only on this level. Both Socrates and Aristophanes take this "old quarrel" into the public domain and thereby (indirectly) involve the many in the "old quarrel.".

rival in love told Socrates he was not acting in his own interest by asking the first lover whether he considers philosophy to be shameful. The second lover alleges that his rival has spent "his whole life putting others in a headlock, stuffing himself, and sleeping" (hereafter, this first lover shall be referred to as the athlete or the athletic lover). Doubtless his allegation is made to cast aspersions on the athlete, whom the rival lover would have us believe has led a "distasteful" life.

According to the second lover, the athlete has spent his whole life concerned only about caring for his body. He implies that such a life renders the athlete unfit for judging philosophy, or anything else of importance, and that Socrates is wasting his time. Moreover, the rival lover gave the appearance of being surprised that Socrates might have expected an answer from the athlete other than that it is shameful to philosophize. Although the second lover implies that the athlete had spent his life doing low or trivial, if not shameful things, he offers no immediate justification for such evaluations.

The second lover's criticism of the athlete's activity apparently indicated that he regarded deeds to be more indicative of character than speeches. His criticism of the athlete was almost wholly concerned with the athletic lover's activity and not necessarily with what he had said. (Ironically, the second lover will later attempt to defend the notion that a life consisting only of speeches is sufficient. Yet his blush, when the athlete ridicules him by casting aspersions on his way of life (134a9-b2) indicates that he is not as sure of the superiority of speeches to deeds as he would like to be.) The rival lover's professed surprise about Socrates asking the athlete about philosophizing is intended to show obvious scorn for the athlete, and perhaps for the athletic way of life. The rival lover knows Socrates by name -- it would seem Socrates' reputation was at least known to some -- and he evidently desired Socrates instead to ask <u>him</u> about philosophy, presuming them to be natural allies.

However, it would not seem fair to dismiss the athletic lover as someone slavishly and exclusively devoted to athletics; he was also in love with a boy attracted to philosophy. Whatever the rival lover might say, one is not justified in presuming that the athlete was awed only by the boy's physical beauty. It is possible that the athlete depreciates

philosophizing -- his rival's "strength" -- primarily as a way of depreciating his rival in the presence of the boy.

Having recounted what the two lovers said, Socrates provides some additional narrative description, including the simple observation that one lover (the second one we hear speak) had spent his time on music, (hereafter, this lover shall be referred to as the musical lover or the lover of music), whereas the other lover, the one now being "abused," had spent his time on athletics.[21] Socrates says it seemed to him he ought to dismiss the one he first questioned (the athlete) because he did not "claim to be experienced in speeches, but rather in deeds," and turn the question "to the one who claimed to be wiser in order to receive some benefit from him." In doing so, Socrates himself seems to accept a simple priority of speeches over deeds.[22] In considering Socrates' action, we are compelled to consider whether either wisdom or the pursuit of wisdom comes only by way of speeches, and furthermore, whether philosophy is exclusively focussed on speech (logos). It is worth noting here that Socrates later returned to the athlete, acknowledging him as having some relevant expertise derived from his athletic experience.

The athletic lover's initial repudiation of philosophy, to repeat, expresses the opinions of the city which traditionally has regarded philosophy as pointless speech about lofty theoretical things.[23] Philosophy itself is seen to be of no practical benefit, i.e., it is seen to be,

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[21]Again, we might wonder whether Socrates knew this about the lovers prior to his entrance to the school. The musical lover's suggestion that Socrates should know about his rival's activity (132c6-9), along with Socrates' subsequent remark about the training of the two, seems to suggest the possibility that Socrates may have known something about the lovers prior to entering the school, or at least may have expected to meet such lovers from opposing backgrounds. (See Christopher Bruell, "A Socratic Introduction to Political Philosophy: Plato's Erastai," a paper prepared for delivery at the 1976 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, The Palmer House, Chicago,Illinois, September 2-5, 1976, p.2.)

[22]In the Clouds, Aristophanes criticized Socrates for spending time with only those who were gifted intellectually. Because of this, Socrates appeared unaware of human natures and concerns other than his own and of his own kind. Consequently, Aristophanes critized Socrates for being unaware of his own nature and his own activity, or rather, why he was compelled to his own activity. By seeming to ignore deeds and attend only to speech here, Socrates seems to act in the manner Aristophanes accused him of.

[23]The word theory is to be understood as the classical philosophers used it, i.e., knowledge that could only be loved for its own sake since it had no practical or productive utility.

at best, useless, and more likely corrupting.[24] Perhaps this view is a common one because most people are generally more impressed by deeds than words (as in "talk is cheap" and "action speaks louder than words").[25] Most people regard "philosophy" and "philosophizing" to contribute nothing to the important concerns of everyday life. In light of such public disdain, one question that arises is why some beautiful boys are attracted to philosophizing nonetheless.[26]

Socrates' reticence in withholding his surmise about the subject of the dispute is in contrast with the athletic lover who openly repudiated philosophy. Socrates' "observation," however, seemed to be for the purpose of eliciting some opinion about philosophy insofar as he characterized the boys' dispute (which he confides to his audience as having the appearance of being philosophical) as being "great and noble." We do not know whether he expected such a pejorative opinion, amounting to a sweeping dismissal of philosophy.

Socrates claims that he marvelled at the athletic lover's response, though he does not indicate why. Possibly there is something marvellous about a lover in love with a boy attracted to philosophy and yet having such an avowed aversion to philosophy himself.[27] The athlete may resent the boy's time and affection being even partly given over to "philosophy." He apparently regards the boys' geometrical /astronomical /philosophical dispute to be inherently

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[24]Republic, 487d; Gorgias, 484c3-486d2; Xenophon's Recollections 1. Vl. 11-15; cf. Marx, "Theses on Feurbach."

[25]It is probably true that the many have, like the athlete, been educated by the poets, to see philosophy as being at best, impractical. The whole of the Republic, when all is said and done, is devoted to the question of the true education of a human being. The Republic thus poses a major question regarding who is the true educator of human beings. Both the poet and the philosopher claim to be the one who is the true educator of human beings.

[26]Contrast the handsome young horseman Pheidippides who sees those in Socrates' "Thinkery" as being physically ugly and generally unhappy (Clouds, 1.102-104). Pheidippides is a lover of honor. Yet Pheidippides is won over by Socrates although we never see what went on inside the "Thinkery" that causes his change. Aristophanes, however, provides a clue by telling us that the clouds were not attracted to Socrates for his wisdom, but rather because of his boasting and swaggering manner and his great endurance (L. 361-3). Pheidippides' change shows an ambitious young man's eros can be re-directed toward the higher things. Moreover, Aristophanes' clue suggests how important the role of eros is in the education of a human being.

[27]Socrates' "marvelling" may be ironic. He may relate that he "marvelled" for the sake of having his audience reflect on what the athlete said and why he said it.

trivial, thus boyish and not manly. He thus sees the boy being deflected from fulfilling his nature, and thus disfigured by the dispute. His implicit criterion of "greatness and nobility" would seem to be utility; he points to the futility of "natural philosophy." We are confronted at the outset with the prospect that natural philosophy itself does not have the appearance of being great and noble in the eyes of ordinary citizens because it is not useful. If this is the athlete's criticism of philosophy, then it is a far more profound criticism than it first appears. It may suggest that philosophy must take on a useful appearance, or indeed make itself useful in some way, so that it can come down from the heavens and find itself a home in the cities.

It has already been said that the lover of athletics and the lover of music are also identified by Socrates as being lovers of a boy. It now seems that because each share a love for the same boy, there is a conflict regarding each lover's respective pursuit. Each lover's spirited behaviour and apparent familiarity with the other indicates an ongoing contest for the beautiful boy. The lovers' contest has its roots in the desire for the boy and it finds its expression in the denigration of the other's pursuit. Socrates' handling of the discussion may suggest that the contest between deeds (represented by the athlete) and speeches (represented by the musical lover) points to a whole way of life, or rather, it points to a life which joins together the mixed needs of both body and soul.

The contrast between ways of life may itself put men in conflict. With these two lovers, however, we may suppose that their conflict is exacerbated by this competing desire for an attractive boy, perhaps attended by the fear that the other is more worthy of having him. Yet, neither the athlete nor his rival spoke positively about his own way of life; each one merely attacks his rival's occupation in front of the beloved. We might wonder whether one ever has to give reason for deserving what is beautiful, and, would a rational account ever resolve a conflict of this nature?

A third kind of conflict is represented in the boys' own dispute which appeared to be about certain cosmological teachings. Their dispute possibly displays a lack of clarity in each one's attempt to communicate his understanding of respective views about the heavens. Either view, or both, may have been correct or incorrect. This we will never know, which serves to

remind us that although there may be some things we cannot ever know with certainty, this needn't mean that they are not worthy of thought. However, we are sure that two incompatible views cannot both be correct. In any case, the boys' views were likely only opinions and it was dispute over divergent opinions that put them in conflict. The replacement of opinion with knowledge usually settles this kind of conflict if truth -- a common good -- is cherished most by everyone concerned. However, contrasting ways of life usually put men in conflict, especially if they see themselves to be competing for a limited good, i.e., their own advantage.

The boys, however, were apparently in dispute about the structure of the cosmos, which belongs to no one, though views about it do (as Socrates reminds us, 132a6-7). Although the political strife that results from different opinions of the cosmos is less directly obvious, it is not necessarily less consequential. Such views constitute the embracive intellectual architecture which lend significance and direction to actual political life in its various settings. Consider the massive contrast between a view of the cosmos as centered on the earth and operating through the beneficient attention of God, and one that sees it as centerless and purposeless and moving in accordance with blind mechanical principles. Some such "cave" view permeates political life at any given time and place. Different views of the cosmos can radically alter the way in which actual political life is lived.[21] According to the Republic, it is precisely this cave view that the philosopher attempts to transcend in order to attain a true understanding about all things important for a human being to know.

By commenting on the boys' dispute, which had the appearance of being over warring cosmologies, Socrates stirred the athlete to speak. Thus Socrates (innocently?) fomented another dispute by turning to the lover of athletics (who, simply in appearing athletic, may have thereby appeared unphilosophical) asking him whether the dispute was about something "great and noble." Contrasting views may occasion dialogue, and if it is between suitable dialogic partners, such contrast will promote a mutually profitable discussion. In such cases, each interlocutor brings his own peculiar powers to bear on the subject at hand and thereby

[21]Consider, for example, why the Catholic church was concerned to have Galileo temper his teachings about the heavens.

magnifies the other's understanding. There is no evidence that these rival lovers, however, had spent time in such discussion with each other until brought together by Socrates (compare 132c9 with 134a9-b2). What we initially see instead is a purely eristical dispute. Eristics (from eris, "strife"), unlike dialectics (from dialego, discussion), is concerned only with winning the argument, and usually at any cost (134c1-4). In other words, eristics is undertaken not for the sake of gaining an understanding of truth, but instead for the sake of victory, and the honor that typically attends it. (cf. Republic, 454a).

The musical lover, to repeat, openly chastised Socrates for not acting in his own interest by speaking to the athlete. The musical lover apparently believed it is not worth one's time to hear what nonphilosophers have to say about philosophizing, which implies that he has not thought very much about political life. But rarely is one simply born a philosopher (cf. Republic, 491a10-b1, 496c3-5), and so most all philosophers come from the ranks of the nonphilosophers. By contrast, Socrates himself shows a willingness to undertake discussion with nonphilosophers in his soliciting the athlete's view about the boys' dispute. Socrates, however, exercises a degree of caution in withholding from the athlete his conjecture about the boys' activity. As in the case of Anaxagoras,[29] philosophy, in its pursuit of eternal truth, is always confronted with the possibility of attack by the political order, and perhaps for good reason. The political community is first and foremost a community of opinion, a broad consensus of agreement on fundamental matters. The philosopher's pursuit, if unrestrained, can actually subvert this community of opinion, replacing it with nothing but air (causing

[29]Anaxagoras was put on public trial for his philosophizing. He was indicted either by Cleon on a charge of impiety because he declared the sun to be a mass of red-hot metal or by Thucydides, the opponent of Pericles, on a charge of treasonable correspondence with Persia as well as impiety. He was condemned to death but unlike Socrates he fled the city. Diogenes Laertius says of Anaxagoras: "He was eminent for wealth and noble birth, and furthermore for magnanimity, in that he gave up his patrimony to his relations. For, when they accused him of neglecting it, he replied, 'Why then do you not look after it?' And at last he went into retirement and engaged in physical investigation without troubling himself about public affairs. When someone inquired, 'Have you no concern for your native land?' 'Gently,' he replied, 'I am greatly concerned with my fatherland,' and pointed to the sky.... When being asked to what end he had been born for, he replied, 'To study the sun and moon and heavens.' To one who inquired, 'You miss the society of Athenians?' his reply was 'Not I but they miss mine.'" See Diogenes Laertius, Lives Of The Eminent Philosophers, Vol. 1, p. 143.

men like Aristophanes' Strepsiades to take action against the philosopher). Socrates' caution in beginning a discussion with the athlete would seem the proper response to that possibility.[30]

In contrast to Socrates, then, the musical lover openly and antagonistically belittles the athlete, and by doing so, subjects himself to the possibility of counter-attack. He may not be able to contain this attack to his preferred battlefield of speech (logos). His words and actions toward the athlete suggests the possibility of his being animated, at least partly, by envy.[31] He may doubt himself in the presence of the athlete and he may even resent him for arousing such self-doubt. The athlete apparently possesses physical expertise, and probably the popular esteem that normally attends it. By acting in an imprudent manner, manifested in his arrogant disdain for the athlete, the musical lover illustrates exactly how a defense for philosophy should not begin; indeed this might be said to be proven by the athletic lover's response. He probably sees philosophizing through the actions of the musical lover. The musical lover apparently has done nothing to gain the athlete's respect, and the athlete does not blush at the musical lover's attempt to "abuse" him (cf. 134b4), which is as much as to say, the athlete does not bother to take the musical lover all that seriously.

The action so far causes a new question to emerge -- how does one begin a defense for philosophy? Indeed, is it defensible, given that it supplants other worthwhile activities? And then, is the act of defending philosophy properly part of what constitutes philosophizing? It would seem that knowing what philosophizing is is coterminous with making a defense for philosophy, which is as much as to say, one must know what one is defending.

It has been suggested that the musical lover may be incapable of defending himself and his own actions, let alone of defending philosophy itself. We are about to see him make an attempt to defend philosophy which appears even more comical than Aristophanes'

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[30]Bruell, "A Socratic Introduction to Political Philosophy" p. 2.

[31]"Envy which is the canker of Honor is best extinguished by declaring a man's Self, in his Ends, rather to seek Merit than Fame; And by attributing a Man's successes, rather to divine Providence and Felicity, then to take his own Virtue or Policy." Francis Bacon's "Of Honor and Reputation" in Bacon's Essays, with notes by W. Aldis Wright, (London: William Heinemann, 1927.) p.220.

description of philosophizing itself.

III. The First Attempt to Define Philosophy (132d7-135a4)

We recall that in response to Socrates' observation about the boys' dispute, the athlete retorted that philosophy is idle chatter about the heavenly things and other such nonsense. Socrates then asked the athlete whether his harshness was because he believed philosophizing is shameful. At this point, the musical lover interrupted, implying that the athlete's opinion about philosophy was not even worth considering. Yet he seemed sufficiently provoked by the athlete's attack to respond in kind, ridiculing the athlete's way of life. With this act, however, he offered no positive defense of either philosophy or philosophizing as such. This brief sequence of events diverts Socrates' explicit attention to the musical lover.

Socrates turned to the musical lover explaining this to his audience by saying that the athlete didn't claim to be experienced in speaking whereas the musical lover had claimed to be "wiser." The musical lover's implicit claim to being wise became evident when he suggested Socrates did not know what was in his own interest (132c4-5). Socrates treated the musical lover's claim "to be wiser" as an invitation to question him thoroughly so as to "receive some benefit from him" (132d6-7). It appears that what the musical lover had in mind was for philosophers to speak only with "philosophical" types. Socrates' explanation, however, also serves as a clue concerning his anonymous audience: his (or their) understanding of philosophy may be superficial.

Now Socrates informs the musical lover that the question had been addressed in common, but if he supposed he could answer more "finely"(kallion, beautifully), then he should proceed, and state whether it seemed to him noble or not to philosophize. Although Socrates willingly changed interlocutors, he poses this "common" question differently (132d9; cf. 132c1-2): whether philosophizing is positively shameful is replaced with whether it's positively noble. One may presume this question is asked differently because each lover seems to have a different view of philosophy. But whereas the athlete believes philosophy isn't a high activity, the musical lover implies that the athlete couldn't possibly know what philosophy is because he has spent his life doing low things. Socrates, though, may also pose this "common" question to attract the boys, to determine whether it could move them from their

own dispute, which the two lovers were observing.

The musical lover's tacit claim to be "wiser" suggests he might be able to answer whether it is noble to philosophize. For surely a "wise" man knows what is noble. But if he can answer this question completely, then he should know as well why philosophizing might appear shameful to others. One can also say that his attempt to defend the nobility of philosophy by alleging the ignobility of anyone who criticizes it is not likely to endear it to nonphilosophers. Socrates nonetheless changes interlocutors ostensibly because the musical lover, who had claimed "to be wiser," alleged that his rival was inarticulate. Socrates thus seems to acknowledge that athlete's lack of experience in speech would prevent him from giving a "fine" answer. Socrates persists in looking for an answer as to whether it is noble to philosophize.

In contradistinction to the boys' astronomical/philosophical dispute, the initial exchange between Socrates and the two lovers is concerned with questions about the noble and the shameful, i.e., their discussion is explicitly concerned with things that are a part of the political realm. Yet it should not be forgotten that it was because of the boys' dispute about the heavens that this discussion about the nobility of philosophizing began.

However the musical lover substantially understood philosophy, he apparently believed he had a "fine" answer about its nobility. And it is worth considering whether one's initial attraction to philosophy may stem as much from some formal recognition of philosophizing as a noble or exalted activity as it does from an overwhelming curiosity. In this dialogue, the subject of philosophy immediately surfaces in a sea of argument (132a4-b1), and for some this seemingly disputatious character of philosophy itself may be attractive. There are grounds for suspecting this is part of its attractiveness for the musical lover. Others, however, as noted before, may believe philosophy is shameful precisely because it seems never to escape from dispute. The athlete appears to regard philosophy this way. Thus, Socrates' question about the nobility of philosophy is a legitimate question to ask someone who is attracted to it, as the musical lover would seem to be, and who moreover claims to be "wiser."

Socrates recounts that after having asked the musical lover whether it seemed to him noble to philosophize, the two boys thereupon "became silent," and to the neglect of their own dispute became listeners to the one about the nobility of philosophy. The controversy of "natural" philosophy seems to have been supplanted by a new dispute about "political" things. But unlike the one it supplants, we are given a detailed account of this new dispute. Apparently something other than geometric proofs could move the boys; this is evident in their becoming silent but attentive listeners. While engaged in their own dispute, the two boys ignored the rival lovers even though they may have been enjoying the special attention. But when Socrates provoked the two lovers to speak about the character of philosophy itself, the two boys turned their full attention to this new dispute. By asking this particular question, Socrates captures the attention of both the boys and their lovers.

At this point, Socrates says that he did not know what the lovers felt, but upon the boys becoming involved in his discussion, he was stricken wild. He thus refers to his notoriously erotic nature,[32] adding that he is "always stricken wild by the young and beautiful." Here it may be worth emphasizing that Socrates is "stricken wild" only after he has captured the boys' attention with a substantially different kind of dispute. That is, he was not stricken wild simply by the sight of the beautiful boys, nor by their disputing. It is possible the boys, who have now been drawn to this new discussion, were also stricken by the "young and beautiful" Socrates, who had drawn attention to himself by his explicit concern for whether it is noble to philosophize. Although Socrates expressly disavows knowing what the two lovers now felt, he observes that it seemed to him the musical lover was in agony.[33] Perhaps the musical lover now notices that the boys have turned their attention to this new dispute, and hence to him and his rival in love, only because Socrates has called into question the character of philosophy.

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[32](Cf. Clouds, l. 362-3; Symposium, 177d-e; Apology, 23b-d, 33d; see also Friedrich Nietzsche, Birth Of Tragedy, Aphorism 13, Translated with Commentary by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 89.

[33]The Greek word agon, means the struggle for victory in contest. See also 135e3, where agoneia also occurs and is translated "in competition."

The musical lover replied, "Now Socrates, if ever I should consider it shameful to philosophize, I would not even hold myself to be a human being, nor would I anyone else so disposed." He emphasized his words by pointing to the athlete, his rival in love, and, by speaking in a loud voice so his favorite might hear him plainly (133b4). To someone antecedently attracted to philosophy, this answer may reflexively lend the musical lover a noble appearance because he seems to suggest that philosophy is the way of life that is noble for a human being as a human being. Obviously this claim is especially pointed at the athlete, whom he wishes to contrast unfavorably to himself.

In another narrative aside, Socrates informs his audience about something curious in the musical lover's repudiation of the athlete. Socrates says the musical lover's manner of answering revealed a great love of honor (philotimia) -- not, that is, a great love of wisdom (philosophia).

This observation is worthy of further consideration. Not only does the musical lover actually (and ironically) pursue a political good, honor, but his statement actually reminds one that Socrates makes what seems to be the same claim in the Apology, i.e., "the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being" (38a). However, a closer look at the two statements reveals that they are not at all the same. To begin, a reflection on the respective dramatic situations alone will reveal all the difference in the world. Socrates makes his claim in front of a hostile audience who are on the verge of executing him for his philosophizing. Socrates gives it as only one alternative explanation for his own irritating way of life (the other being daimonic possession; Apology 21e, 23c, 30a), and admits that it is the less credible of the two. The musical lover, on the other hand, makes his claim in front of an audience that is, with the apparent exception of the athlete, friendly toward philosophy, and all are apparently interested in the question about whether it is noble to philosophize. He treats the supreme worthiness of philosophy as self-evident.

This one difference is obviously of considerable political importance. In the Apology, Socrates risks the wrath of a hostile audience for the sake of philosophy in a life or death situation. The future of "political" philosophy itself hangs in the balance. The musical lover's

professed doubt in front of a friendly audience about whether the athlete is a human being reveals his concern is not for philosophy, but instead with whether he can curry the audience's favor. His opinion that the supreme worthiness of philosophy is self-evident to a true or complete human being reveals that he doesn't truly understand philosophy or politics, or the tension between them, or human nature in its full significant diversity, or (thus) himself. He makes this claim believing it is perfectly safe to do so -- the audience, and especially its dominant figure, would seem to be on his side. He expects to conclusively win its favor at his rival's expense.

There is also a great difference when we examine the two claims strictly on their own terms. The examination Socrates talks about begins out of a sense of shame for one's own ignorance (Apology, 21b, 29d-e). Shame over anything can cause one to wonder about what is noble for a human being; shame points to the possibility of the beautiful or noble, and of becoming a complete or perfect human being. But wondering what is noble reminds one of one's ignorance about this perhaps all-important thing, as well as ignorance about oneself. The musical lover's answer, on the other hand, would suggest that he has already answered this very difficult question about the nobility of philosophy. Ironically, his answer reveals instead that he has never encountered this sense of shame over his ignorance and thus has never wondered about what is noble. Or, perhaps he has so simplified life's experience that it does not seem to him difficult to explain. In either case, he would seem to be ignorant of his ignorance. Socrates, the philosopher of ignorance, spent a lifetime of unswerving devotion and ceaseless labor investigating life's most important questions, only to conclude at the end of such a life that he remained ignorant about the most important things (Apology, 23b).

So when Socrates again asks the musical lover whether, on his view, it seems noble to philosophize (133b5), he indicates a dissatisfaction with the musical lover's response. Perhaps he may have expected more from a "wise" man about the nobility of philosophy. An adequate answer about the nobility of philosophy requires something more than the kind of inflammatory rhetoric which the musical lover has directed toward his rival.

With the dialogic responsibility now shifted to the musical lover, Socrates wonders whether it is possible to know whether anything is noble or shameful "if one doesn't know to begin with what it is?" The musical lover fields this question easily, replying that of course he believes one must first know what something is before answering whether it is noble. So Socrates asks him whether he knows what it is to philosophize. This question is harder to handle because it is amenable to at least two interpretations: 1) "Can you state clearly what philosophizing is?"; and/or 2) "Do you have experiential knowledge of philosophizing?" The latter is a much more biting, ironic question, for it basically implies that no "textbook" or pat answer is adequate. One must know by experience what it is to philosophize in order to answer whether it is noble to philosophize. Perhaps the only real knowledge of philosophy is experiential. So interpreted, Socrates' question then also asks whether the musical lover has this experience.

Yet, besides being hard to handle, Socrates' question is also surprising because he has shifted away from the question of the noble which has dominated the dialogue until now, to the question of what it is to philosophize. We might have expected Socrates to ask "what is noble?" in following up the musical lover's reply, but Socrates asks instead if he knows what it is to philosophize. This question will dominate the remainder of the dialogue. Socrates allows the concern for whether it is noble to philosophize, or, for "what is noble?" to recede into the background, at least with respect to his interlocutors. Presumably, then, were they to conclude that philosophy is noble, it would be in light of a conventional, i.e., political, conception of nobility. Such a conception would likely be reducible to political utility.

However, upon reflection, the question of what is noble is brought to our attention more effectively by Socrates seeming to ignore it. Socrates' procedure suggests that in order to know whether it is noble to philosophize, one simply must know what it is to philosophize. This seems peculiar, for it would seem that one cannot answer whether anything is noble unless one can also answer what noblility is. This would not be a problem if philosophizing and the noble are somehow one and the same thing. It is certainly not obvious that they are. Socrates, accordingly, initially treats them as separate issues.

The musical lover claims that he knows very well what it is to philosophize. He appeals to the authority of the great statesman and Athenian legislator, Solon. According to him, Solon had said "I grow old, always learning many things."[34] Although he displays uncertainty about the exact context of the quote (133c5), he was confident that Solon's saying, which he immediately interprets in a specific way, expresses what it is to philosophize. According to him, "the one who is going to philosophize ought always to be learning at least some one thing, both when he is younger and when he is older." His interpretation implies that philosophizing is much learning (polymathia), i.e., that the one philosophizing is "to learn as much as possible in his life."

Socrates hesitated before challenging this conception, he says, because the musical lover appeared to be saying something worthwhile. Perhaps this is out of respect to Solon (and Socrates' anonymous audience), but perhaps there is more to it. He relates that after he had "reflected somewhat," he asked the musical lover explicitly whether "he regarded philosophy as being much learning." The philosopher thereby silently excludes Solon, famous sage and statesman, from criticism. Socrates draws attention to his hesitation even in his narration, and thereby asks us to try to understand it. His hesitation and his subsequent question to the musical lover suggest that at least two things must be accounted for: 1) what causes Socrates to hesitate; and, 2) why has Socrates changed the focus from a question about philosophizing to a question about philosophy (133c1; cf. 133c10-11)?

Socrates may hesitate because philosophizing at first glance does seem to consist of "much learning." This in turn, would seem to reveal desiring knowledge for its own sake (or, of the activity of inquiry for its own sake). After all, philosophers are ordinarily understood as devoting their lives to the pursuit of knowledge, and it is natural to see this as the

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[34]See note 6 to Leake's translation: "The [musical lover] replaces Solon's word didaskomenos ("learning" or "being taught") with manthanein ("to learn") in his interpretation. The primary sense of the word Solon had used is "being taught," as a father has a son brought up to be a good citizen, whereas the speaker's word has a primary sense of learning for oneself. Solon's word embraces learning how to live, while the speaker's word often implies more intellectual learning." It is revealing that the musical lover cites a politician to define what it is to philosophize.

quantitative accumulation of knowledge. Given this understanding of philosophizing, philosophy is accessible to all human beings who have sufficient leisure (cf. Apology, 23b). Moreover, the very attempt to pursue knowledge is often seen by those attracted to the theoretical life to signify, if not to instantiate nobility, in that it bespeaks a liberation from the drudgery of everyday life. However, it must be conceded that the investigation of all natural things in their virtually infinite detail will never be wholly completed, much less within the lifetime of any one investigator. But while it is true that all of nature can't be known by any one man, those who try to get a general, or basic, understanding of it (such as Einstein) are often considered noble, whereas people who read almanacs from cover to cover are not. Socrates may hesitate because he regards some attempts or forms of the study of the whole of nature to be noble.

However, what the musical lover has said has the straightforward implication that all things are equally worthy of being learned, and that his sole concern is a quantitative one. Considering only what he has said, it would seem that all inquiry, regardless of content, is equally "philosophical." Apparently one is "philosophizing" regardless whether one is investigating heavenly bodies or the effects of a new stop sign in some rural town. Contrary to all common sense, the musical lover's definition suggests that there is no discrimination about what is to be learned: he does not specify what is to be learned, but merely "as much as possible." It is an intellectual project without any direction, or standards of importance or rank order. His definition, then, suggests the impossibility of having comprehensive knowledge. This eventually leads to the conclusion that there is not any knowledge which ought to completely satisfy a human being, that one cannot even imagine wisdom in which the mind can find rest. There is an obvious and massive incompleteness to philosophy on his terms because the task of gathering information, or "data," never ends, as modern science so tellingly reveals. The endless gathering of more and more information without regard to the natural limitations on one man's mind for synthesizing it results in neither the noble nor the good for a human being, for there is no final good result. Indeed, from the common sense perspective -- the political perspective -- the philosophic life seems a ridiculous waste of a

life.

Still one might wonder whether there isn't something noble about learning many things all one's life. Socrates, after reflecting somewhat, then asks the musical lover whether philosophy is much learning. Here, it is useful to keep in mind that Socrates has already identified the musical lover as a great lover of honor, and it is unlikely that such a person would be willing to undertake a study which would gain him no honor. Thus Socrates may be attempting to discern what the musical lover would see as being honorable (or noble) in such a conception of philosophy (which could include the "natural science" theorizing regarded by the athlete to be useless and pointless).

According to the musical lover's definition, wisdom would simply come by way of accretion. We understand knowledge to grow this way in terms of the arts and the crafts. The one who is to practise an art comes in to the possession of an extant body of knowledge, but one which is always subject to growth and refinement. It is not clear that philosophizing is commanding such a specific body of knowledge, as the musical lover's definition appears to suggest. This is why Socrates switches from talking about philosophizing as an activity (133c1), to philosophy, as a body of knowledge (i.e., "much learning" 133c10-11).

Socrates had been talking about philosophizing as an activity; the musical lover conceives philosophy to be a body of knowledge and that to philosophize is simply to gain possession of this ever-growing body of knowledge. Taken at his own words, the musical lover sees any learning as the pursuit of wisdom without distinguishing what is good for a human being, or noble.[35] The complete lack of direction in this intellectual project would mean we could not rank a brilliant theoretical physicist higher than a man who counts convertibles in the city; as well, we would have to agree without qualification that any and all learning benefits humankind, if everything is equally worthy of being learned. Whether he realizes it or not (almost surely not), this is implied in the musical lover's definition.

The underlying premise of the musical lover's view is that everything is equally worthy of being known. But his own definition doesn't capture his own "common sense"

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[35]He will eventually distinguish the things to be learned (cf. 135b1-3).

rank-ordering of the things to know, which in turn reveals an inadequate reflection or self-consciousness about his own favorite activity. The real problem with the musical lover's definition is its revealing his inattention to the actual hierarchical character of knowledge, and the problem of synthesizing all observations into a single coherent account.

Although there is an infinite amount to know, clearly we want to know whatever is good or important. The antecedent question, therefore, is "what is good for a human being?" Socrates appears to agree that the musical lover's definition of philosophy lacks a recognition of this first question, as his next remark indicates. Socrates now asks the musical lover whether he regards philosophy to be "merely noble or also good" (agathon).[36] Socrates has decided to bring the question of the good explicitly to the fore, after reflecting on the musical lover's answer.

The musical lover answers that he considers philosophy to be very good. Socrates' question is about the goodness of philosophy. The investigation of the goodness of philosophy may be the question that one must begin with in order to answer whether it is noble to philosophize. Surprisingly, perhaps, the question "what is good ?" may lend itself to more reasonable discourse than does the question "what is noble?" All action is directed to the attainment of some good, but it would seem that none of the things one desires is unambiguously good: surely this question must be asked of philosophy itself. The rank-ordering of knowledge leads one to the knowledge of the good, for it is in light of the good that all things are measured. The rank-ordering of knowledge culminates in knowledge of the good as the highest (noblest) kind of knowledge (Republic, 505a ff; especially 517b-c). The examination of how one conceives what is good may help one better conceive what, in turn, is noble for a human being, the only being so far as we know for which the noble is an issue (134a9).

Socrates' introduction of the good serves implicitly to introduce what is the most important practical question for a human being as such, perhaps the ultimate philosophic question: what is the best way of life? This very question implicitly underlies every choice

[36]The first mention of the good in the dialogue, then, occurs in conjunction with philosophy.

that any human being makes in regard to his own life. This question therefore transcends any particular time or place -- it is the permanent human question. To justly answer this question with finality, however, one is compelled to consider all ways of life in all times and places, and this includes imagining times and places which have not existed in order to reflect upon the possibilities for a human being.[37] Since there is no way to certify that one's survey is truly comprehensive in this sense, one necessarily settles for assessing the alternatives of which one is aware. Still it remains the case that everything a human being chooses to do is done out of a desire for the good life, whether one is aware of it or not. This requires asking what the good life is. Actual political regimes are themselves responses to this very question. Different regimes inform actual political life differently, encouraging certain ways of life, discouraging others. One is thus faced with questions about the substantial differences amongst regimes, which leads one finally to ask which regime is best: which regime promotes the good life for a human being?

In an effort to clarify the musical lover's view, then, Socrates asks whether he would say the same thing about the love of athletics, that it is noble as well as good. So apart from what is philosophy, the musical lover is confronted with three other implicit questions: what is good?; what is noble?; and, what is their relationship? He seems oblivious to the problematic character of any of these questions. This is why Socrates asks whether it is only love of wisdom (philosophy) that is noble and good, or whether he would say the same about love of athletics (philogymnastica). By examining the particular activity of athletics, Socrates points to the underlying question: what is the best way of life? This would seem to require a synthetic understanding of both "what is good?" and "what is noble?"

Given the musical lover's earlier derogation of the athlete's way of life, his response would seem to be predictable. But perhaps Socrates is testing whether the musical lover remembers the earlier question about first knowing what a thing is before knowing whether it is noble or shameful (133b7-9). One wonders in particular how this lover would know by experience whether the love of athletics is either good or noble, given his avowed aversion to

[37]It is important to remember that political philosophy was once not a possibility proven in practice.

athletics. His subsequent discussion of athletics confirms one's suspicions of his ignorance about the matter. By asking the musical lover whether the love of athletics is good and noble, which includes knowing what athletics is, what goodness is, and what noblility is, Socrates turns the tables on him.

The musical lover appears to recognize his dilemma. According to Socrates, he "very ironically spoke in a double fashion" by replying

> Let it be said by me to this fellow that it is neither; to you, however, Socrates I grant that it is noble and good. For I hold that to be correct. (133d9-e2)

The musical lover's answer indicates that he is very much ruled by opinion, reputation, and conventional standards of what is honorable. Why would he concede that athletics is noble and good except for the fact that it is honored in the cities? Moreover, he must allow that athletics is both noble and good if he is to continue maintaining that philosophizing, understood as much learning, is both noble and good. Presumably much learning would embrace the learning of athletic things as well. Had the musical lover said otherwise, he would have to admit that "much learning" is not noble and good. He wants to preserve his definition of philosophizing while at the same time taking a shot at his rival.

He preserves his definition and includes the love of athletics as being both noble and good by speaking in a "double fashion." He will say to the athlete that the love of athletics is neither noble nor good; to Socrates, however, he is willing to grant that it is both. Yet Socrates and the athlete, as well as the two boys, can hear both versions of his answer. He obviously intends his "duplicity" to be understood by every one even though he wishes to distinguish his audience into two groups and to be identified with what he regards as the higher of the two.

Socrates, in a narrative aside, says this lover furnishes an example of being ironical. Apparently this is the only place in the Platonic corpus where Socrates says anything about what he means by irony.[31] We should note here that Socrates makes a double point about the musical lover's double talk. That is, the musical lover, "very ironically... spoke in a double

[31]This is noteworthy because Socrates was notorious for being ironic (See Apology, 38a).

fashion," which is to say, what is ironical is the manner in which the musical lover speaks. What's really ironic is that he doesn't understand true irony: he does not have the facility to say two things at once.[39] By drawing our attention to irony, Socrates invites us to look at the manner in which the musical lover does speak.

Socrates implies that irony is speaking in a "double fashion." Irony, then, is speech which allows for at least two interpretations. This is not an accurate characterization of the musical lover's speech. We see the musical lover express two different answers to the same question -- he openly professes to give Socrates his true answer and a false one to the athlete. Successful irony does this with one expression; as Socrates employs it, irony is speaking both the true and the false at once with the intention that certain hearers see this while others don't. As a form of communication, then, irony is used to express one's views so as to conceal from some what is revealed to others.[40] For this reason, irony can be an effective means to communicate one's true views in a safe manner, or in a politically salutary manner.

Leo Strauss observes that in opposition to the boaster, the ironic man understates his worth, which is as much as to say, he must appear as knowing less than he does when he communicates with others about things that are important to them. If he were simply to communicate his true worth to others, he would be incredible, appearing to be nothing more than a boaster, and thus ridiculous and contemptible. Strauss identifies the ironic man as the magnanimous man; he goes on to discuss irony properly used:

> ...the man [who] regards himself as worthy of great things while in fact being worthy of them -- is truthful and frank because he is in the habit of looking down and yet he is ironical in his intercourse with the many. Irony is then the noble dissimulation of one's worth, of one's superiority. We may say, it is the humanity peculiar to the superior man: he spares the feelings of his inferiors by not displaying his superiority. The highest form of superiority is the superiority in wisdom. Irony in the highest

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[39]"To be ironic" is to dissemble, to say less than one thinks, to present oneself as knowing less than one does. The opposite of irony is boastfulness, claiming to be more than one is (See Clouds, l. 102). This, however, is not a simple definition of Socratic irony, but rather, of the conventional notion of it, i.e., that one doesn't mean what one says. In Socratic irony there is a sense in which you do regard what is said as being true.

[40]There are many reasons why one would choose to speak in such a manner. Often this reveals a closeness to some but at the same time conceals this closeness from others -- as, say, when two lovers, in public, communicate their affection but do so without making it obvious to those around them.

> sense will then be the dissimulation of one's wisdom, i.e., the dissimulation of one's wise thoughts.[41]

Strauss suggests there is a hierarchical ranking of human beings determined by a ranking of minds, and irony is the mode of speech befitting the noble mind. The one in the habit of looking down invisibly establishes his superiority by taking care to conceal his superiority. Whereas it seems true that most people are generally contented with whatever powers of mind as they have, preferring to believe all human beings are in some way equal,[42] it may be argued that the very recognition of rank is itself a measure of one's higher rank.[43] But given the generally preferred belief of equality of rational power, the wise and noble man reveals both his wisdom and his nobility by politely concealing his wisdom.

Ironic speech is the philosopher's way of communicating a deeper truth hidden behind the apparent reality, the result being that the deeper truths are well hidden. Traditionally, there are three reasons why the philosopher speaks carefully: 1) to avoid persecution; 2) self-censorship, in recognition that certain ideas are inherently dangerous when indiscriminately broadcast; and, 3) his love for philosophy and a kinship with those who are close to him. Ironic speech therefore allows the philosopher to express safely his understanding of the phenomena, while avoiding dogmatism. This question of presentation in the public expression of one's philosophizing is not only a literary question. It is concerned with a kind of communication which has a much larger scope than literature, being coterminous with politics. Strauss continues

> Communication may be a means for living together; in its highest form, communication is living together. The study of the literary question is therefore an important part of the study of society. Furthermore, the quest for truth is necessarily, if not in every respect, a common quest, a quest taking place through communication. The study of the literary question is an important part of the study of what philosophy is. The literary question properly understood is the question of

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[41] Leo Strauss, "On Plato's Republic" in The City and Man, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p.51.

[42] cf. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, edited by C.B. Macpherson, (Middlesex, England: Pelican Books, 1968), ch. 13; Rene Descartes, Discourse On Method, translated by Donald A. Cress, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980), Part One.

[43] cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Translated, with Commentary, by Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), Aphorisms 30, 40, 61, 203, 213; especially, 257, 260, 263.

the relation between society and philosophy.[44]

One might well wonder why Socrates describes the musical lover's response as being ironical. His response is neither the noble dissimulation of his worth nor the noble dissimulation of wise thought. Instead he desires to establish superiority over the athlete. As events prove, he is an arrogant boaster. What we hear him say is precisely not irony, but simple sarcasm, attended by an explicit rejection of the propriety of speaking differently to different people. His intention of speaking to some what he believes to be false, openly expressed to everyone, would require him to make the weaker speech the stronger. He wishes to appear both higher than the athlete (133b1-3), while at the same time consistent (133c5-8).

By drawing attention to the manner in which the musical lover spoke, Socrates invites us to consider something important about political life. The musical lover's speech and actions illustrate that for most human beings, there is an uneasy relationship between truth and political life. His behaviour toward the athlete implies that he believes the natural strife among men requires that truth be used selectively so as to further one's own good (whereas Socrates uses it to further the common good).

Socrates exploits the musical lover's admission that the love of athletics is noble and good by asking whether much exercising is the love of athletics. Whether from ignorance or from a blindness caused by a commitment to his definition of philosophy, the musical lover answers that it is. He overtly seizes upon Socrates' suggested analogy, contending that much exercising is the love of athletics (philogymnastica) in the same way that much learning is love of wisdom (philosophia). Although the content and means of each pursuit are different, each pursuit apparently is both noble and good. What they have in common other than love is as yet unclear.

Socrates then asks whether those who love athletics desire anything other than what causes good bodily condition. He thus raises a question about the ends of the activity. Athletics, thus construed, is not something intrinsically good (i.e., loved for its own sake) but

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[44]Leo Strauss, "On Plato's Republic" in The City and Man, p. 52.

as a means to something else. If the musical lover is not willing to regard wisdom similarly, as merely an instrumental good, then he should not so eagerly seize upon Socrates' proffered analogy. As well, we see that Socrates drops the question of what is noble from the explicit discussion. The musical lover responds that those who love athletics desire only that which causes them to be in good bodily condition. This understanding limits lovers of athletics to the often dreary and punishing task of improving their bodies while it ignores the concern for beauty and strips away the more noble aspects of athletics: the glamour of competition and its honors and other rewards.

Ignoring such obvious considerations (which reflect the musical lover's lack of reflection), Socrates pursues his main point by asking whether it is many exercises alone that cause good bodily condition. His question is a reasonable one because things other than much exercise, such as diet and rest, also play a role in determining whether one has a body in good condition. One's entire way of life, which may include much exercise, determines the condition of the body. His question suggests that there might be more than one way to bring a body into good condition (133e10). The musical lover, however, asks how anyone could be "in good bodily condition from a mere few exercises."

At this point, Socrates turned to the athlete since it seemed to him that the athlete (or, as the lover of wisdom calls him here, "the lover of athletics") should be "aroused" (or "provoked"; kinetikos) because of what he has heard his rival say about athletics. Socrates asks why the athlete (calling him the "excellent one") is being silent while his rival is saying these things. He asks the athlete whether he believes that good bodily condition is attained from many exercises or the measured amount.[45] Socrates apparently turns to the athlete because he might have the requisite experiential knowledge. Everyone has an opinion about

[45]Professor Bruell adds "Socrates' appeal is perhaps not as superfluous as it might appear to be. "Measured"[metrios] is indeed so flexible a term as to be applicable to any quantity that is beneficial; but for that reason it might be applicable to a very large or even to the largest possible number of exercises, so long as that number is beneficial. That is, a "measured" amount might not be different from many. That it is different -- or indeed the same -could not perhaps be established without the assistance of the relevant experience." "On The Original Meaning of Political Philosophy: An Interpretation of Plato's Lovers." p.5.

the good condition of the body, but presumably an athlete's carries special weight.

With Socrates' new formulation of the question, the athlete replies that he supposed "that even a pig -- as the saying goes -- would have known that a measured amount of exercises causes bodies to be in a good condition." His reply indicates lovers of athletics are motivated by more than concern for the good condition of the body. His scorning his rival reminds us of pride in virtually all human dealings. His reference to the ignoble subhuman pig makes it clear that his love of athletics is not strictly for the good of the body. He strongly suggests that his soul, at least, has its own needs.[46]

The lover of athletics further derides his rival by adding "So how wouldn't a man know who is sleepless and unfed, whose neck is unchafed and who is thin from anxious thoughts?" The athlete thus ridicules his rival's weak and emaciated appearance, which he implies is the normal consequence of constantly "philosophizing."[47] There is no evidence that he regards the specifics of his ridicule as applying to Socrates as well. Moreover, he thereby makes it clear enough to his rival that he was not much bothered by his pointed criticisms. Not surprisingly, his surprisingly deft repartee pleases the two beautiful boys and they burst into laughter. Socrates recounts that thereupon the musical lover blushed. He had just been thrown for a fall in speech, supposedly his "strength."

Perhaps what is most surprising about this "licking" in speech is that Socrates solicits the athlete to join him in refuting the musical lover, who seems a friend of philosophy.[48] The athlete's ridicule consists in drawing attention to his rival's apparently unsettled life and his sickly bodily condition which, for him, is ample visible evidence of his rival's ignorance about the good way of life. And through this spirited rejoinder to his rival, the athlete reveals that

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[46]In the Republic, Glaucon scorns Socrates' "healthy city" because it is a city fit for pigs only (372c-d). There is neither honor nor nobility in that merely "healthy city." See also Recollections, I. iii. 7-8.

[47]See Clouds 100-104; Birds 1553-1564. Socrates' students, or rather, students of philosophy were often portrayed as thin, pale, and miserable.

[48]Charles Fairbanks suggests this represents the joining together of reason with brawn and thus shows that philosophy needs physical force which reason alone is unable to provide. Fairbanks, "Reason, Technique, and Morality," p.14. This, then, represents the joining together of body and soul which suggests that the body itself must be reckoned with by the one philosophizing. (cf., Clouds 1483-1511.)

he too is concerned about the noble, about distinguishing the high from the low.

No doubt the musical lover's humiliation is exacerbated by the apparent ease with which the athlete delivered the rude rebuttal effectively portraying him as an anxious weakling. The two boys "burst into laughter" because the "wiser one" has been neatly rebutted by his supposed intellectual inferior, someone who "didn't even claim to be experienced in speeches." Their laughter and the athlete's rebuttal cause the musical lover to blush. His blush points to at least two questions about one who poses as knowledgeable but isn't: 1) Why do most human beings believe it is important to appear to have knowledge?; and, 2) Why are most human beings pained when their thought is ridiculed? It would seem that these two questions ultimately boil down to a formal recognition of the primacy of thought. That is, most human beings measure themselves by what they think and by what others think of them (severe criticism of one's mental capacities is a particularly painful experience). The musical lover blushes because he is ashamed, for he cares about how he appears to others, especially intellectually.

The athlete's rebuttal revealed his musical rival to have been ignorant, not only about athletics, but (by implication) about philosophy as well. The blushing rival, apparently ashamed more by his loss of status than by his ignorance, shows that he is not above the criticisms of the athlete he professes to despise (cf. 132c3-4). He clearly cares about the opinions of the nonphilosophers,[49] which is to say, he has not transcended ordinary conceptions of what is noble and shameful.

Socrates, however, does not relent in his questioning. He asks whether the musical lover will concede or is he willing to fight "the two of us (i.e., Socrates and the athlete) concerning the argument?" Socrates thereby openly threatens to ally himself with the athlete in this argument about philosophy.

This conflict is now brought clearly to the surface (134c1-6). The musical lover will fight to to defend his own position. Most human beings fight most strenuously for that which

[49]In the Clouds, Aristophanes accuses Socrates for not caring about the city's needs and for not caring about how he is seen by those in the city. In making this accusation, Aristophanes points out to Socrates his ties to the city and, moreover, why he should be concerned about its well-being.

they perceive as being their own (cf. Republic, 330c), or that which they love. The love of one's own, including the love of one's own opinions, causes many a conflict in political life. The musical lover answers that he would gladly contend against the athlete, his rival in love, claiming that he would be capable of supporting the thesis he has put forward, even if he had put forward a weaker one.[50] For, according to him, the athlete is nothing. Whether he is as confident about this as he once was is doubtful. Be that as it may, he now assures Socrates that whatever he might say to the athlete, when he speaks to Socrates he does not have the "slightest desire to seek victory contrary to his own opinion." Thus he is willing to agree with the argument.

The musical lover again appears "ironical" (cf. 133d9). He in effect boasts that he is strong enough in argument to defeat the athlete even if the athlete's opinion happens to be correct. Thus, he openly admits that he is willing to resort to sophistry to make the weaker speech the stronger when the occasion suits him. On such an occasion, he would rather win the contest with his rival than seek the truth. He apparently presumes that everyone is content to rely exclusively on speech in such confrontations, perhaps because his physical condition inclines him to prefer such an unrealistic belief.

On the other hand, Socrates' apparent siding with the athlete may suggest that philosophy, as the genuine pursuit of truth, may need the help or protection of physical force, such as is dispensed through politics. Philosophy collides with politics when it is seen to be prejudicial to the conditions of actual political life, especially by corrupting the thinking of the young, including the best among them. If it is to come down to the city, it would seem philosophy has to make itself more generally attractive, and ally itself to those exercising political power. This requires that the philosopher educate those dominant in political life to see that they need philosophy, or that it is desireable.[51] The athletic lover is more representative

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[50]There are weak and strong arguments. Philosophers are typically charged with making the weaker argument the stronger. See Plato's Apology of Socrates, 18b; cf. Clouds, l. 112-118.

[51]According to the Republic, the philosopher also must resort to using myths, tales, and fables for the purpose of conveying a salutary political teaching because not all human beings are equally susceptible to reason. This salutary political teaching enhances actual political life, educating those young gentlemen who are eventually to

of the political majority than is the musical one.

Having said he would not seek victory contrary to his own opinion when in discussion with Socrates, the musical lover now concedes that it is the measured amount of athletics that "produces good condition in human beings" (134c4-5). But Socrates had asked whether it is the measured amount of exercise that "causes human beings to be in a good condition with regard to their bodies" (cf. 134b5-7). The musical lover's oversight is immediately -- if only tacitly -- corrected by Socrates leading him to agree that in the case of food and all other things having to do with the body, it is the measured amount which most especially benefits. This would appear to be a major concession from the musical lover who till now has seemed completely oblivious to the body's needs, and apparently has led a life that bears witness to this. It is curious that Socrates would bother to secure this agreement from the musical lover, unless considering the body and its limitations prepares one to further consider what benefits a human being.

The body is benefitted by whatever promotes its ability to do its proper work. The prior question, then, is what is the proper work of the body. Good physical health enables the body to do its proper work and good physical health is a good desireable in and of itself, and it is certainly good for the one who has it. But the athlete, surprisingly enough, has already made it clear that good bodily condition is not enough to satisfy any sane human being. If the body is the most important thing (its health, strength, beauty), then the "measured amount" of exercise may be so great as to dominate one's life (see Republic, 404a; 410b; see also Recollections, I. ii. 4), leaving little time for the goods of the soul.

Though virtually all human beings desire to be healthy, it is evidently not the dominant desire in most: judging from how they actually live, people do prefer the goods of the soul. However, the question of bodily health necessitates acknowledging the fact that there are different bodies, with different requirements. Thus the "measured amount" required for a human being to attain good health differs from person to person. We may never see comprehensive physical health in an actual human being, but it is something which can be

[31](cont'd) rule in politics.

grasped by the imagination and understood by the mind.

Generally good physical health is sought for the sake of having it rather than for the sake of understanding it. Good health is not merely subjective. It is supported by nature insofar as the body and its parts tend toward good health.[52] This tendency of the body suggests an order to nature governed by what is good.

Things become more complicated, however, when we recognize that what is good for a human being is dependent upon more than what the body needs. Human beings can make choices -- they are not ruled simply by necessity. Even in the case of mature adults it is not easy to assess what is good for a human being,[53] although we do recognize that certain things are simply good for us. The issue is admittedly complex, but even so the musical lover has come to light as an inattentive master of his own body.

Socrates compels the musical lover to agree that it is the measured amount of things that are good for the body,[54] which is a common sense perspective. Having secured agreement that a measured amount is good for the body, Socrates now turns the speech to the soul.

Socrates now asks whether it is the measured amount of the things administered to the soul that are good for it. The musical lover, evidently not having reflected much about either bodies or souls, too readily concludes that it is, and further agrees that "the things that can be learned are one kind of things that are administered to a soul." The musical lover's "assent" that the measured amount of learning is beneficial indicates he recognizes his definition of philosophizing as much learning to have been refuted.

We should note that he assents to a spurious argument. However, Socrates' spurious argument may be politically relevant insofar as he may be encouraging a "measured amount"

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[52]For example, the immune system fights infections; broken bones will mend themselves; and cuts to skin will normally heal.

[53]Mature adults continue to smoke in spite of mounting evidence showing its ill-effects. There are also thrill-seekers who are willing to risk injury, sometimes grievous bodily injury, for the sake of a thrill. And some men even hunger for war (for the most part, privately, these days). The point is that human beings often do act out of consideration for something other than the good condition of their bodies.

[54]Recall Professor Bruell's explanation that the measured [metrios] is applicable to any quantity that is beneficial.

of philosophizing by people, with the measure varying as per particularities of souls. Once again, because gaining an adequate understanding of the world entails understanding the hierarchical character of knowledge (matching the hierarchical character of things), and the problems of synthesizing evidence into a single coherent view, philosophy is not simply "much learning." Considering that Socrates has concluded that it is a "measured" amount of learning that is good for the soul, the musical lover could have asked whether much learning is good for the soul provided whatever one learns is beneficial. But he doesn't ask. Socrates' question (134d 5-7) invites us to consider whether the soul is analogous to the body, as the musical lover uncritically accepts that it is.

Because the body and soul co-exist, the question which shall emerge is whether the rule of oneself -- private rule -- is properly undertaken primarily from the perspective of the body's needs, or from the needs of the soul. The body's needs often dictate the actions of human beings; most would agree that the first task of a polity is to meet the urgent bodily needs. All political action is guided by some thought of good and bad since it is directed towards attaining what is good and avoiding what is bad. To consciously pursue what is good requires having knowledge of what the good is. The body supplies us with enough evidence to show that it is incapable of providing such guidance. For this reason, it becomes clear that it is necessary for the soul to rule because the soul possesses some intimation of what is good for a human being. The soul must be in a "good condition," i.e., a condition of being capable of ruling for the good of the whole man. The real question, then, is what puts the soul in a good condition.

Socrates now poses a series of questions designed for the purpose of finding an expert (134eff.). The expert Socrates is looking for knows the most efficient means to a certain end. Socrates looks to the arts to see whether the soul's good condition is known by any expert comparable to the skilled experts on the body. Socrates' questions are designed to determine whether there is someone who can simply tell them what the soul's good condition is, or how it is attained.

The three of them, i.e., Socrates and the two lovers, agree that it would be just to ask a doctor or a trainer -- one or both -- what sort of exercises and foods are measured with regard to the body. It would seem there is sometimes a division of expertise, or more than one kind of expert, with respect to certain problems (consider 134e7-8). This, however, may also serve to remind us that there are different kinds of bodies and different activities of the body (133e7-8). In the case of the body, one art (the trainer's) corresponds to maintaining good bodily condition and improving it (especially strengthening it), while the other (the doctor's) corresponds to curing bodies and showing one how to prevent bad bodily condition. Even granting some important disanalogies regarding body and soul, this division of expertise concerning the body suggests that more than one expert may be required to put the soul in good condition.

The three then agree that the farmer is the one to ask about "the sowing of seed" and "how much is the measured amount." With regard to these questions, it would depend on what type of crop is to be planted as well as the quality of the ground. Moreover, the farmer would want to ensure that he properly sowed that measured amount of seed (i.e., properly spaced at the proper depth). As well, the farmer is himself guided by medicine somewhat insofar as he is concerned to grow nutritious food rather than something useless, much less harmful.

Socrates then wonders whom they would "justly ask about the planting and sowing in the soul of the things to be learned, how much and what sort is the measured amount?" He does not ask, notice, who are the experts on either feeding the soul or exercising it. Are there soul doctors or soul trainers? These would seem more plausible analogues than soul farmers. One might, that is, speak of learning as feeding the soul, or mathematical exercises (such as the boys were apparently engaged in) as a gymnastics of the soul. What would constitute "sowing in the soul the things to be learned"? Might planting the right questions be the proper "seeding" of the soul, "how much and what sort"? Might the question they are presently considering be such a seed? According to Socrates, the three of them were completely at a loss. Who is the expert on the soul? The problem in identifying this expert

involves understanding the well-ordered soul. Their discussion has acknowledged that there is a soul but no one can identify who knows for sure its good condition.

Socrates recounts to his audience that they were all completely perplexed but that he playfully asked the lovers whether they would be willing to ask "these boys here." It is important to recall that the boys ceased from their dispute when Socrates asked whether it is noble to philosophize (133a1-3). Perhaps the two boys then wondered themselves whether it is noble to philosophize. Without insisting upon a reply from the two lovers or the two boys, Socrates wonders whether they are perhaps ashamed "as Homer says the suitors were, who didn't deign that there would be another who would string the bow?"[55] Perhaps one of the boys could have given a better answer than either of the lovers, as the beggar Odysseus strung the bow better than the suitors. We also might wonder whether Socrates believes Homer has possibly answered the question about what things are to be planted and sowed in the soul. In any case, Socrates explicitly claims not to know who the expert is, and the two lovers were apparently unwilling to venture even a guess.

Perhaps the one who knows the answer to Socrates' question would be the rightful lover of one of the two boys, as in the Homeric reference. The suitors of Penelope, unlike these lovers, never supposed she might string the bow, much less that the bow would be used to kill them. But like the suitors, the lovers might not recognize the one who may answer this question. Perhaps neither of these two lovers is the rightful lover of the beautiful boy. We may wonder whether answering this question is the criterion Socrates has in mind for deserving love in return. After all, such a knowledgeable lover might then be competent to see to the cultivation of the beloved's soul. However, we must also wonder whether the beloved boy would be won over by either of the two lovers provided he could answer Socrates' question? Would Penelope have desired her suitors any more had they been able to string the bow?

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[55] Odyssey, Book XXI, l. 285ff. The suitors were unable to string Odysseus's bow, part of the test to determine who was worthy of having Penelope. They were indignant that an unseemly beggar, whom they believed was no threat to them, would propose that he be allowed to try to string the bow. Homer, Odyssey, Translated by Richmond Lattimore, (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 316.

Socrates' discussion with the two lovers about whether it is noble to philosophize led to the question "what is philosophy?" The first attempt to answer it establishes that it has something to do with learning, and that "the things that can be learned are one kind of things that can be administered to a soul." Of all the learnable things, then, which should be fed to or planted in a soul? Presumably such as would contribute to its good condition. Not all edible or plantable things are equally nutritious. The musical lover's definition of philosophizing as much learning is rightly rejected because it pays no attention to the hierarchical ranking of knowledge. Now one might ask as well whether such an uncritical activity, such indiscriminate learning, would put the soul in good condition. If not, what would? It is to this question that Socrates next turns.

IV. The Second Attempt to Define Philosophy (135a5-137b7)

We recall that Socrates has just recounted that the two lovers seemed to lose heart because they could not determine who should be asked about putting the soul in good condition. Their lack of knowledge about the soul's good condition was impressed upon them by Socrates who implied that they thereby have failed to impress the boys. Socrates also jokingly implied that the young boys may be able to answer the question as well as the two lovers. The lovers are thus dispirited in more ways than one. Socrates therefore decides to "investigate it in another way." He apparently desires to continue the discussion with the lovers, but we have to consider that the question about how to put the soul in a good condition may also be directed towards the two beautiful boys. Socrates has, after all, just finished reminding us of their presence.

Socrates renews the investigation by asking, "What sort of things that can be learned do we guess to be especially those which the one philosophizing must learn since it isn't all or even many of them?" In asking this question, Socrates distinguishes the philosopher as being something other than a possessor of expertise. Bruell elaborates on Socrates' distinction, saying that the philosopher

> is closer to the lovers of athletics spoken of earlier than to a doctor or trainer. While a lover of athletics was indeed consulted regarding exercises, such lovers were said to desire only what will make their bodily condition a good one. What forms these lovers, we can say, is a desire to benefit from, rather than to exercise or even to possess, the expertise regarding exercises. Similarly, a philosopher, it was now implied, must learn the mathemata which are "measured," must acquire the learning which benefits the soul.[56]

The dialogue to this point suggests that the philosopher's primary concern is to put his own soul in a good condition through learning the right things in the right way. But because the two lovers were unable to point to any expert on the soul, much less answer themselves what the soul's good condition is, Socrates can expect no more than a "guess" about what things the philosopher must learn. In asking for a "guess," Socrates hints that he recognizes the difficulty of proceeding in an area where no solid knowledge is easily identifiable. But in simply asking what sort of things the one philosophizing must learn, he allows the problem of

[56]Bruell, "On The Original Meaning Of Political Philosophy," p. 7.

the soul's good condition to recede into the background. The soul is never mentioned again, but it should not be forgotten, though (ironically) it seems to have been by the lovers.

The "wiser one" (the musical lover), however, is apparently encouraged by Socrates' question because he responds without hesitation, saying,

> These would be the noblest of things that can be learned, and the fitting ones, from which one might have the greatest reputation for philosophy. And one would have the greatest reputation if he were reputed to be experienced in all the arts; or if not, in as many as possible and especially the noteworthy ones, through having learned the portions of them which are fitting for the free to learn, the portions which belong to the understanding rather than to manual work (135b1-8).

He does not characterize his response as a guess, perhaps because he is sure he has answered the question correctly. And it is readily apparent that he is still attached to the view that philosophy is, somehow, much learning.

It is worth noting that his rival, the athlete, does not even venture a guess. What we have seen of his character to this point admits of several possible reasons for his silence. While he's supposedly inexperienced in speaking, his limited contributions thus far prove that he is neither inarticulate nor slow-witted. He may simply not care to answer the question because he may believe athletics is the pursuit that satisfies the soul's longings, but this is unlikely, since he readily accepted the superficial view that athletics is an affair of the body. Moreover, the character of his unsolicited participation earlier (134e ff.) indicated that he was paying serious attention to the discussion; and, Socrates' observation that he was disheartened (135a5) confirms that he does indeed care. Still, he may prefer to see his rival attempt to answer this question and risk making a fool of himself once again (134b4). Or, he may wish to avoid embarrassing himself. There is, however, no firm indication that the athlete recognizes the difficulty of the question. It is possible, then, that he simply does not know the answer. Unlike the body, the soul's good condition may be something that not everyone has an opinion about.

The musical lover is eager to respond in order to redeem himself for being unable to answer Socrates' earlier question. What first strikes us about his answer is his confident emphasis that the philosopher have a great reputation. Either he has forgotten the problem of the soul's good condition, or he does not take it seriously, or he believes that honor is what

best nourishes it, not knowledge. In any case, according to the musical lover, the philosopher's great reputation is to be derived from having theoretical knowledge of the arts. His emphasis on the philosopher having a reputation as a knower of the the arts is probably inspired by Socrates' earlier search for an expert (134e ff.). Because the musical lover believes the philosopher studies the "noblest" things, which he tacitly identifies with things of importance to others, he is sure that the philosopher deserves a high reputation. His response can thus be construed as intended to solve the problem of being unable to find the soul expert.

The musical lover also believes that knowledge of the arts is the "noblest" study for the philosopher. Yet his answer about the "noblest of things" to learn was immediately preceded by silence about what things are good for the soul. His silence then undermines now the credibility of his response, for we recall that earlier he agreed that philosophy is noble and also good (133d5-e2). Perhaps he believes he has addressed this problem by assimilating a "great reputation" with actual nobility and goodness.

The musical lover is sure the philosopher deserves a great reputation, and that gaining it is what motivates the philosopher. He specifies that it may require knowledge of those areas where reputation plays a significant role, i.e., the "noteworthy" arts. He implies that the philosopher's motivation to possess a great reputation is perfectly compatible with being both good and noble. But is there such a perfect harmony between a great reputation and nobility or goodness?

The musical lover's emphasis on reputation here invites us to consider reputation itself, which was mentioned earlier in the dialogue. Socrates himself first mentions reputation in relation to those young boys "reputed to be most remarkable for their looks and the good repute of their fathers" (132a2-3). Moreover, Socrates' conjecture that the boys' dispute was "either about Anaxagoras or about Oinopides" (132a5-6), and his withholding that conjecture from the athlete, reminds us that natural philosophy had a reputation, albeit, not simply a good one. Philosophy is controversial. Socrates' mention of the fathers' good reputation suggests that their reputation is in some way good for the boys as well, in that they are

thereby privileged to attend a school filled with other remarkable young boys. And in dealing with artisans, we normally rely on reputation (cf. 136c7-d1; 136d7-8). Socrates, though, does not explicitly indicate that he believes a good reputation is a good thing for philosophy.

The athlete's initial attack on philosophy was in fact an attack on philosophy's reputation. His use of Aristophanic criticism had launched the discussion. This forces us to consider whether an attack on philosophy's reputation may be the proper beginning for an examination of whether it is noble to philosophize (132c1-2).

The athlete's response to Socrates' initial observation almost surely reflects one side of philosophy's reputation, and is probably confirmed by his experience with his musical rival. His view of philosophy, more disdainful than actively hostile, could lead to indignation if he came to believe that such a "useless and pointless" activity actually could threaten what he cherished, i.e., he may become actively hostile toward philosophy. The reputation of philosophy is of concern for a politically astute philosopher, for he appreciates that political life is intolerant of threats to its existence, whether real or merely apparent.[57] The athlete's initial response reflects the city's dominant opinion about philosophy.

The political philosopher must be concerned about the reputation of philosophy because reputation is an especially important kind of common opinion. Actual political life exists in the realm of opinion, and every political community is founded upon a community of shared opinions and conventions. These shared opinions and conventions as a rule are not seriously questioned, and have to remain so for the regime to maintain the loyalty and devotion of its citizens in the face of internal or external threats. This community of opinion affirms the goodness of one's own regime, of one's own way of life, especially one's conception of justice. On the other hand, the philosophical pursuit, and it alone, seeks to replace opinion with knowledge. Indeed, this would be one way to define philosophy (cf. Republic, 517a ff.). But as one learns from this dialogue, it can not be equally concerned with all opinions on all things, but only with the most important. The problem is in

[57]Socrates' reputation had much to do with his being brought to trial. In the Apology (23d), Socrates said his reputation was tied to philosophy's reputation and that he was accused by the city of the stock charges it brought against all philosophers. The philosopher's reputation is apparently tied to philosophy's reputation.

identifying, or somehow "guessing" what these are. Are the most important things what are reputed to be the most important things? The open pursuit of the truth by the philosopher, however, would make philosophy appear potentially destructive to others insofar as the philosopher would seem, in his striving to rise above the merely parochial views of any particular political regime, to destroy any legitimate basis for the regime by questioning the common opinions constituting that basis.

Socrates achieved a certain notoriety in Athens for examining the reputation of others, especially their reputation for knowing important things (Apology 29d7-30a5). He openly doubted things most people are naturally attracted to. One thing most people are naturally attracted to is one who has an impressive reputation, regardless of the activity. A political regime proudly treasures its greatest citizens and showcases them as its own product. These great citizens not only provide noble models for the youth to aspire towards, but are themselves a testimony to the goodness of the regime. Honor is the highest reward a regime can offer its greatest citizens. But as the athlete's opening remark suggested, philosophy is not universally honored, indeed it is widely reputed to be a waste of one's life (132b7-8).

In light of such considerations, it is ironic that the musical lover contends the philosopher should learn only the portions of the arts (reputedly) befitting a free man, those "which belong to the understanding," and therefore acquire a great reputation. Presumably the philosopher would thereby gain honor and a reputation from those more impressed by deeds, those like the athlete whom the musical lover disdains. He truly is a lover of honor, not a lover of wisdom, which he treats as a means rather than an end (i.e., intrinsically good). His solution requires the philosopher impress nonphilosophers, thereby perhaps to gain a great reputation, but would this not occur at the expense of his freedom, namely his freedom of inquiry (cf. Republic, 605c9-d5; 500b8-c9)?

A reputation for wisdom is a political good, being but the common opinion of the polity. A great reputation for wisdom is an honor which involves the approval of others. This is why a reputation for wisdom is so paradoxical. A "great" reputation for wisdom in some

way presumes that the many are wise,[58] at least wise enough to recognize true wisdom (rather than simply approve of those who most beautifully articulate their own common opinions). The greatest reputation for wisdom would only indicate that one seems to be wise to the many less wise, although it does not preclude the possibility that one indeed is wise. But is it important at all that the "political" philosopher seem wise or indeed have a reputation for wisdom?

On the one hand, as we have noted, any political community is based upon, and to some extent bound together by, a community of opinion. For all we know, the complete revelation of unadorned truth would destroy any and every such community of opinion, which would destroy the environment for philosophizing itself. For which reason, a truly political philosopher might keep certain of his thoughts private (cf. 133d9-e2), and he may even appear unfamiliar with philosophy or philosophers.[59] If such is the case, it could result in the philosopher appearing ridiculous and contemptible to others, as in Aristophanes's Clouds or, as in Plato's depiction of the philosopher first returning to the cave (Republic, 517a).

On the other hand, the musical lover's belief that philosophy is noble attests to the fact that some people are attracted to philosophy, even when they don't know what it is. Hermogenes, in Xenophon's Defence Speech To The Jury, is attracted to what he perceives is the nobility of philosophy. We also know that philosophy sometimes presents itself as independent, tough, and strong. The leading Cloud in Aristophanes' play ratifies this facet of philosophy, expressing his admiration for Socrates because, as he says "you swagger in the streets and cast your eyes from side to side, and barefooted you endure many evils and put on a solemn face for us" (l. 363-4). Both Plato's Gorgias and Apology of Socrates depict the philosopher in a public setting, where he is shown to be independent, tough, and strong, presenting a noble appearance in front of those who publicly scorn philosophy. The political philosopher, then, would take precautions that philosophy has such a reputation as can attract those who are naturally suited for it, which must be the ones who are not dominated by a

[58] Clouds, 520-522.
[59] Consider Socrates' approach toward the athlete about the boys' dispute.

concern for honor, since this concern fetters one's judgment. But even though the political philosopher is necessarily concerned about philosophy's reputation, it would seem that this is an instrumental concern, and not what motivates him.

Perhaps this is why Socrates' next question attempted to redirect the musical lover's attention from reputation to what must motivate someone who could rightly be called a lover of wisdom. He decided not to directly address the musical lover's emphasis on reputation, but attempted instead to clarify the musical lover's reformulated conception of the philosopher's task. In this way, Socrates brings to the surface some of the implications of the musical lover's view of what motivates the philosopher.

Socrates asks the "wiser one" if he meant knowing the intellectual portions of the art in the same way as in the case of carpentry and adds:

> For there you could buy [i.e., as a slave] a carpenter for five or six minae; but you couldn't buy a first-rate architect even for ten thousand drachmae. Indeed there are few of them even among all the Greeks. Is it something like this that you mean? (135c1-4)

Socrates' analogy maintains the two-fold division of men advocated by this lover: the architect's expertise is primarily intellectual, while the carpenter's work is primarily manual. And is this not what primarily accounts for both the greater reputation and higher price of the former? Socrates' analogy also sheds some light on his earlier division of men between experts and non-experts (134e ff.); we recall that the expert properly rules in an art and the non-experts are properly subject to his rule. The expert has the knowledge of what means achieve the ends. But both the architect and the carpenter are experts, and when they work together, they work toward the same ultimate end, the house.

Socrates' example, then has us consider whether the architect's expertise is in some way connected to having knowledge of carpentry. The architect is primarily responsible for the planning and design of the house, but to realize his design, he must take into account both the laws of nature involved in the building of things, and various other arts, including carpentry, which are required for the actual construction. There is an interdependency that exists among the various arts. The architect's knowledge of the other arts is for the purpose of practising architecture. To the extent he understands the rational principles and limits of

carpentry, he can be an appropriate governor and employer of carpentry.[60]

But might not Socrates' choice of examples be intended to make us wonder to what extent the philosopher is like the architect? In the same way an architect knows the principles and capabilities of all the arts pertinent to building, perhaps the philosopher properly aspires to knowing the basic principles and limits of everything that is, to understanding all of nature, including the things in the Heavens, and beneath the earth. Alternatively, given that architecture is a distinctively human concern, perhaps the philosopher is properly concerned to understand the principles and limits and possibilities of human life, human nature. One might describe the first possibility as natural philosophy, the second as political philosophy. Whether knowledge of either kind is possible is one thing. It is still a further question whether such knowledge would be good for the soul.

A few words about the arts (technae)[61] are in order before we conclude Socrates' treatment of them. Each art is governed by a body of rational principles. In this respect, the arts, proven in practice, typically serve as the model for all knowing. Additionally, each art is potentially open to an endless process of refinement, either by way of new techniques or through additional understanding of nature. Nevertheless, the end of each art remains the same, e.g., health for medicine, or solid and beautiful buildings for architecture. Each art is recognized to be a specific body of knowledge. As models of rational knowing, the principles of an art can, and often do, govern the life of a specific practitioner by enabling and even compelling him to organize his life in accordance with the principles of his art. His freedom as a practitioner, however, is constrained by those same principles. That is to say, his failure to adhere to the specific principles of an art will result in inferior work which, in a practical

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[60]There are theoretical principles that attend to the art of carpentry. It is incumbent upon the architect, if he is to work in collaboration with the carpenters, to know these principles. His planning and design must take into account what is possible for the carpenters to achieve. This does not prevent the architect from imagining the most fantastic designs. His imagination may enable him to see even more clearly what is possible by looking at what is impossible. See Leon Craig, "An Introduction to Plato's Republic," (Edmonton: Printed and bound by the University of Alberta, 1977) p. 92.

[61]The Greeks used the word technae to embrace all the arts ranging from shoemaking to astronomy.

way, determines whether he continues to practise.

It has been noted already that an interdependency exists among the various arts. This interdependency indicates that each art requires other arts to realize its end, for example, the architect needs carpenters, the carpenter needs tools, the tool-maker needs steel, they all need to eat, the farmer needs buildings, tools, and so on. Thus no single art is self-sufficient, and as such, its principles cannot possibly determine what is the right conduct for a practitioner in every situation. For example, the principles of medicine do not determine how many doctors there ought to be, or how much they ought to be paid. Moreover, a practitioner will find himself in situations which call for judgment well-beyond the jurisdiction of his art. His art does not, and cannot, provide ethical guidance about how he is to consider his own well-being in relation to the well-being of others. Moreover, his art does not explain its relationship to the other arts, nor how they are rank-ordered, nor, indeed what is best for the whole. In short, there are limitations to the arts. Each one is incomplete, and collectively they are incomplete unless there is some art of ordering and managing the whole of life.

The arts, separately or as a body, do not provide comprehensive direction for how a man ought to live, for they do not provide guidance about the individual good nor the common good. They are merely ancilla to the good life, and cannot be themselves models of the good life. They are merely instruments to be used with no inherent value in and of themselves. The value comes from without the art.

The architect has to know how to use the ancillary arts to the extent they are needed to help realize the ultimate end, the house, but he clearly doesn't have to know everything about them, e.g., he may have to know the physical properties of the materials he is using, but he doesn't also have to know how to make steel and glass in addition to being an architect. Architecture is indeed a more comprehensive art than carpentry as the architect oversees carpentry, providing the blueprint, but if there's more to political life than buildings, architecture is not comprehensive simply. Perhaps it can be seen as pointing to the need for such an art, as well as providing a model for the character of such an art.

This is why Socrates nexts asks the musical lover if it isn't impossible to learn all the arts in the manner he has just suggested. The musical lover appears surprised and even offended by Socrates' question. He corrects Socrates by saying

> Don't take me to be saying Socrates, that the one philosophizing must know precisely each of the arts, just he who possesses the art himself, but rather he must know them as is fitting for a free and educated man who is able to follow what is said by the craftsmen in a way that distinguishes him from those present and who can himself contribute his judgment, so as to be reputed most refined and wisest among those who are present at any time when things are said and done concerning the arts (135c8-d6).

The musical lover believes that the practitioners of the greatest arts attend to life's most urgent matters in a practical way. On the other hand, he believes the philosopher needs only speeches so as to "contribute his judgment" about the arts among those others "who are present." He believes the arts provide for what is important in human life and that it is by arts that one distinguishes oneself, where one gains a reputation. The philosopher's task is apparently to provide impartial judgment "when things are said and done concerning the arts." He avoids partiality by not practising, and therefore is not enslaved to any particular art. Yet, the philosopher's freedom, as expressed in the musical lover's conception of the philosopher as a mere knower of the arts, may very well reduce the philosopher to less than the expert in every instance of the arts. It would seem his solution for what the philosopher should learn means, substantially, that philosophy is ancillary to the arts, for the arts rule the many and various needs in human life.[62] The world's needs are attended to by the arts and philosophy could play no more than a derivative role: the philosopher is, in the words of the musical lover, a capable follower, having no distinctive contribution to make, much less any essential or leading contribution.

Socrates says he was uncertain about what the musical lover intended. He asks,

> Do I have in mind what sort of man you mean by the philosopher? For you seem to me to mean those who are like the pentathletes in relation to the runners and wrestlers, in competition. For they too are inferior to the others in their particular events, and are second to them, but are first among the other athletes and are victorious over them. You probably mean that to philosophize brings about likewise some such thing in those who practise this pursuit, that they are inferior to the first-raters in understanding of the arts, but by having the second place, they are

[62]See, however, Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book A, 1 981b 15 ff. We know that not all arts are directed toward life's necessities, that some are directed toward leisure.

> superior to the others, and thus the one who has philosophized becomes a sort of second-best man in everything. You seem to me to be pointing to someone of this sort (135e1-7).

Socrates' analogy of the pentathlete would appear to confirm that the musical lover's conception of the philosopher places him second-best to the expert if he is to do nothing more than speak competently about the arts. But everyone knows that second-best is good enough only so long as the best is unavailable.

The pentathlete trains for five different activities in order to compete for a single prize, whereas the runner and the wrestler devote all their training to one activity. The training of the more specialized athlete includes preparing the body for that one event, presumably beginning with a body suitable for that event. The wrestler would make his body stronger and the runner would shape his body for speed, but both would also seek endurance. The pentathlete would also seek to make his body strong and fast, as well as to increase its endurance. It would seem, however, that he is subject to certain limitations. He cannot have a body as strong as the strongest wrestler nor as fast as the fastest runner simply because he must seek a balanced bodily condition so as to be able to compete in these two different events which require two different kinds of training. Moreover, he must train for three other events: the javelin throw, the long jump, and the discus throw. The pentathlete can be seen as less than the runner or the wrestler when he is running or wrestling because he is not likely to to be the very best at both events. He can not be both the heavyweight wrestling champion, and at the same time, the swiftest runner over distances. On this view, the pentathlete can be seen as no better than second-best.

The musical lover agrees with Socrates' analogy of the pentathlete because he believes it describes the pentathlete as being free from having "labored at anything to the point of precision." But this misunderstands Socrates' image. It's not that the pentathlete is a bit more careless about the precise principles of each activity, but rather that there are compromises forced upon him with respect to each individual event by the bodily needs of the other events. What distinguishes the pentathlete is that he is a runner as well as a thrower, a wrestler as well as a jumper. He is not to be distinguished from the runner or wrestler in terms of how

he runs or wrestles. The important difference between the pentathlete and the athletic specialists is not revealed in the activities they share, but in the range of his competence. The pentathlete is a more complete athlete simply because of the number of events he competes in and knows. He is formed by his desire to be best at five events rather than one. He would know best about athletics as he would have a perspective from five different angles rather than one. Perhaps his understanding of the end or goal of athletics is a higher or more comprehensive one than that of any of the specialized experts. Moreover, he would have a body that is formed to compete in five different events. Insofar as we admire comprehensive bodily excellence even more highly than any special body excellence, we do not regard the pentathlete as a "second best" athlete -- quite the contrary. Might there be a pentathlete of the soul, or even a heptathlete (cf. 138c)?

Socrates' likening of the philosopher to the pentathlete approaches the musical lover's intention but he nevertheless feels compelled to explain himself further. Having been sensitized to the importance of "measure", he incorporates it in this revised conception of philosophy -- "touching upon things to a measured degree" -- acknowledging that unlike the philosopher, the expert is "enslaved" to his particular pursuit.[63] His explanation implies an ability to rank order things, i.e., knowing how much and what sort of things are reputable to know, which may or may not be the same as what is good for the soul. The arts, as models of rationality, still seem to the musical lover to be the heights of human achievement and experience pertaining to things most important to men. (136b1).[64]

We have to further consider that it might be the competition itself, or, the love for it, that we should reflect on, rather than the athletes who are competing. Socrates pits the pentathlete against the runner and wrestler -- a race and a wrestling match. Political life, itself, also may be thought of as a kind of multi-dimensional competition, played out within rules commonly accepted for the most part. Perhaps we are to think of a philosopher in competition. But against whom, or what is he competing for? We recall that the musical lover early on suggested that "philosophers" such as himself are particularly competent to compete

[63]Leo Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy?", p. 39-40.
[64]cf., Gorgias, 448c.

with nonphilosophers in contests of speech, arguments (134c1-4). But pentathletes don't compete against non-athletes, only against worthy opponents. One suspects, then, that Socrates' point is somewhat different. Are philosophers rivals with respect to their common love -- the truth -- or is that precisely what distinguishes true lovers of wisdom from all other lovers: that the object of their desire is something fully shareable without loss, that their common love is truly a common good. Are their "opponents" rather, questions and problems to be wrestled with,[65] the race one with time, their own mortality?

All "political" philosophers have taken into account the peculiar needs of the time and place in which they lived, but perhaps what is most important for the political philosopher is how the pursuit of wisdom is to be continued. Apparently some form of political life has existed as long as there have been human beings; and for better or worse, it has existed and continues to exist without philosophy. But if philosophy is something noble, the political philosopher's most important political task may be that of preserving the possibility of philosophy. The political philosopher must therefore know the political things as well as understanding the various natures of those who compose political life. He must know these things if he is to educate those within political life to see why they need philosophy, or at least why they ought to tolerate it. He would be the true teacher of men if philosophy is the highest point of political life."[66]

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[65]See Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, "Why I Am So Wise", Aphorism 7, Edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), p. 232.

[66]I am tentative on this point only because of the "old quarrel" between philosophy and poetry, or what often comes to the same thing, revelation. The alternative to philosophy is poetry. At issue is the natural telos of man. Philosophy claims the natural telos of man is as a knower; poetry claims the natural telos of man is as a maker.

In "Political Philosophy and Poetry" Allan Bloom addresses the relationship of political philosophy to poetry. Among other things, Bloom says of Homer: "He was the true founder of his people, for he gave them what made them distinctive, invented that soul for which they are remembered. Such are the ambitions of the great poet.... Poetry takes on its significance, in both its content and its uses, from the political nobility of the poet. Poetry is not autonomous; its life is infused by its attachment to the same objects which motivate the best of acting men....The poet's task is a double one....to understand the things he wishes to represent and to understand the audience to which he speaks.... The poet knows the characters of men from both looking at them and speaking to them. That is why the intelligent man takes him seriously; he has a kind of experience with men that the practitioner of no other art possesses....The poet is an imitator of nature; he reproduces what

The musical lover allows that the philosopher is no better than second-best in anything but he regards this second-best character of the philosopher as a strength, so long as he doesn't "enslave" himself to any particular thing. Socrates recounts that he was "eager to know with certainty" what the musical lover meant. He may be thinking in particular about the claim that the one philosophizing is to maintain his freedom by touching "upon everything to a measured degree." And, he may be wondering why the musical lover regards someone who is second-best at everything as being good. The latter issue is what he expressly seeks clarity about.

Socrates' search for clarity is expressed by his asking the musical lover "whether he conceived of those who are good as being useful or useless," which is a potentially political conception of the good. Another philosopher has said

> The philosopher is not a man of intellect, if by stressing intellect one designates a person who can see to the success of his personal undertakings. Aristotle rightly says that "what Thales and Anaxagoras know will be considered unusual, astonishing, difficult, and divine, but never useful, for their concern was not with the good of humanity." Philosophy is distinguished from science by its selectivity and its discrimination of the unusual, the astonishing, the difficult and the divine, just as it is distinguished from intellectual cleverness by its emphasis on the useless.[67]

The utility of philosophy has to be a concern for a "political" philosopher precisely because goodness from the perspective of the political association is identical with utility. And in particular, one's individual goodness is usually measured by his contribution to the common good. Thus, the political acceptance of the philosopher would seem to be dependent upon demonstrating his utility, or rather his apparent utility.

The musical lover reveals more about himself than he realizes in emphatically agreeing that the good are useful and in further agreeing that the wicked are useless. A moment's

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"(cont'd) he sees in the world, and it is only his preoccupation with that world which renders him a poet. He is not a creator, for that would mean he makes something from nothing; were he to look only within himself, he would find a void -- a void destined by nature to be filled with knowledge of the essential articulations of things. What distinguishes a good poet from a bad one is whether he has seen things as they are and learned to distinguish the superficial from the profound." (my emphasis), Allan Bloom, Shakespeare's Politics. (New York: Basic Books, 1969) p.6-8.

[67]Friedrich Nietzsche, Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks, Trans. by Marianne Cowan, (Chicago: Regenery Gateway, 1962), p. 43.

thought about artisans is sufficient to show the inadequacies of the latter claim. Socrates then wonders whether the philosopher is a useful man. The musical lover earlier contended that philosophizing was both noble and good (133d5-e1). He now interprets this as meaning that philosophers are useful, eagerly adding that he regards them as being the most useful of men. Why he regards them as being useful at all is somewhat puzzling given that the only power he has claimed for them is the ability to make some kind of contribution in any discussion about the arts.

Not surprisingly, then, Socrates says to the musical lover, "let us judge, if what you say is true, where these second-best men are useful to us." They ignore for now the philosopher's possible usefulness to himself (cf. 138e). He first asks the musical lover whether he would bring in a philosopher or a doctor to restore health to a sick friend. The musical lover answers that he would bring in both (cf. 134e3). Socrates' unwillingness to accept "both" for an answer compels the musical lover to concede what no one by his own admission would dispute, that anyone would prefer the doctor. Utility seems to have completely supplanted any concern for reputation, though it is worth remembering that identifying a competent doctor may rely heavily on reputation.

Socrates next asks whether, on a storm-tossed ship, the musical lover would entrust his life and property to the pilot or the philosopher. This time, the musical lover unequivocally answers that he would prefer the pilot. Once again, he takes it for granted that identifying a competent pilot is unproblematic. Which is to say, he seems to have forgotten the very competence he attributed to the philosopher as a "pentathlete" of the arts, someone capable of entering into discussion with them about their practice, and even judging it.

These qualifications aside, the musical lover's answers are reasonable. Philosophy's primary task does not seem to be preserving or restoring health or ensuring preservation of self and of property. The philosopher, by extension, is not the one expected to make the best shoes, design and build the best house, sculpt the most beautiful statues and so on.[61] These

[61]The examples chosen by Socrates, however, point to a profound philosophical question regarding the task of philosophy. The question has to do with philosophy's relationship to nature. (See Xenophon, Recollections, I.i. 15, III.iii. 9.) In the Recollections, Socrates clearly raises the question about whether philosophy should be

are important political concerns. Socrates' questions and the musical lover's answers point to good health and the preservation of self and property as necessary pre-conditions for the good condition of the soul.

The threat to physical well-being generally compels one to attend to these more immediate needs of the body. The proper care and maintenance of the body is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the soul to do its proper work. Socrates' examples show that there are arts to attend to the various specific human needs; in each instance of an art, the expert is the most useful man. In so far as such first-rate expertise is available, the philosopher as a second-rate and derivative expert is unnecessary and useless. According to the argument, it even appears that because the philosopher is useless, he may be wicked (of course, even if one mistakenly agrees that the wicked are useless, one needn't make the further mistake of concluding that whoever is useless is thereby wicked; cf. 137b1). In any case, he is neither good nor noble. Because the argument has led to these conclusions, the musical lover is compelled to agree.

Socrates himself does not accept the argument's conclusions. He summarizes what had been said about the philosopher up to this point (136e7-137a6)[68] and he says it looks to him like they were agreeing, according to this lover's argument at least, that if philosophizing is being knowledgeable about the arts in the way this lover says, the philosopher is wicked and useless so long as there are arts among humans. For some reason, however, Socrates "suspects" that all this isn't so, and that the task of the philosopher is not the serious study of the various arts. He criticizes the musical lover's conception of what philosophizing is by using language reminiscent of the comic poet Aristophanes. Socrates says,

> ... to philosophize isn't to have become serious about the arts, nor to live as a busybody, stooping down and learning many things, but rather something else. Since I supposed that this was in fact a matter of reproach and that those who have become serious about the arts were called illiberal.

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[67](cont'd) put to use for "the relief of man's estate." Socrates is clearly aware that there are implications of having philosophy used to battle against nature so as to provide for a more commodious living for the greater lot of mankind.

[68]Socrates' summary includes two things not previously concluded: that both he and the musical lover are philosophers, and that philosophers are good (contrast with 133d2, where he says philosophy is good).

Socrates' reproachful tone as well as the substance of what he says makes it clear that something about what philosophizing is has been missing from the explicit discussion.

Socrates shows that if the task of philosophy is to study the various arts, there is no need for the philosopher -- the world's needs are taken care of by the various arts. Each art is omnipotent within its own area; requisite to each art is an expert who provides the required technical expertise. But we noted earlier the incompleteness of the arts, even considered collectively. Nothing in the arts themselves determines how many of each kind of practitioner there ought to be, nor the respective worth of each, nor for whom the art is best employed. In sum the arts do not and can not provide an adequate understanding of their own employment or ordering. Yet their existence along with their intention, which is to provide what is good in a specific area of human need, suggests the human need for a purposeful inquiry about the whole.

The type of partial knowledge characteristic of the arts fails to completely satisfy the needs of man. The various arts do not provide direction about what is the good life for a human being. The question of what is the good life leads one to the question about the good condition of the soul, if for no other reason than that it is the soul (not the body) which is responsible for gaining such knowledge. The very striving toward completion and happiness may in part constitute the good condition of the soul.[79]

We still do not know whether there is such a thing as an expert on the soul as there are experts in the arts. The arts are essential to actual political life, but it would seem that a form of inquiry that is directed toward the "architectonic" questions of life -- what is good, noble, and just -- is needed to provide guidance about good political life.

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[79]The title of the dialogue, whose meaning is 'lovers,' and which is the only Platonic dialogue which has a plural title, also suggests that this may be the case.

V. The Political Character of Socratic Philosophy(137c1ff)

We now turn to the strange and complicated conclusion of this dialogue. One of the dialogue's few commentators, W.R.M. Lamb, simply dismisses the whole thing as spurious because of this section's bizarre character. He concludes his brief commentary, saying,

> The sudden and impatient manner in which the glimpse of the philosopher is given, and the guise in which he is shown, are not unplatonic: yet, apart from certain details of language, this last section has a clumsy abruptness which suggests that the whole piece may be the work of a skilful imitator, who is successful enough with the dramatic narrative, but cannot rise to the higher levels of Plato's thought and art; and it is to be noted that here the important work of distinguishing the true from the false is not included in the philosopher's business.[71]

Socrates seems to turn without warrant from a discussion of philosophy, supposedly one of the highest human activities, to a consideration of punishing bad animals.

One can certainly sympathize with the temptation to dismiss the dialogue simply on the basis of the opaqueness of its concluding turn. This section seems exceedingly strange, precisely in its apparent disjunction with everything which has preceded it. Be that as it may, that which appears so strange at first sight may indeed provide the key to unlocking this entire perplexing treatment of what philosophizing is.

Lamb of course presumes he adequately understands what philosophy is. To that extent, he is poised to judge rather than to learn from the dialogue. Seeing no ratification of his conception, he dismisses the dialogue as spurious. Needless to say, he also presumes both a profound understanding of Plato's thought, as well as a thorough understanding of the Erastai. It is ironic that in presuming to know what philosophy is, Lamb falls prey to the same presumption as the musical lover, and perhaps Socrates' audience as well. There is a strange character to this narrated dialogue, and one should be open to the possibility that its author intended to provoke the reader to some unconventional thinking. An open mind about what philosophy is, moreover, may be suitably rewarded with a deeper understanding of what Socrates originally had in mind for "political" philosophy. Perhaps by reviewing the discussion to this point, we can better see why Socrates himself leads it in such a puzzling direction.

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[71]Plato, Charmides et. al., edited and translated by W.R.M. Lamb, The Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann LTD, 1927) p. 311.

We recall that the discussion originated with the question about whether it is noble to philosophize. The musical lover claimed that he certainly believed it is noble to philosophize. This led Socrates to ask the musical lover whether he knew "what it is to philosophize" (133c1). The musical lover's two proposals about what philosophy is -- that it consists of much learning, and then, that it is a theoretical understanding of the arts -- have both been refuted by Socrates, who points out that however commonplace such understandings of philosophy are, they are easily shown to be inadequate when scrutinized. The argument so far, which Socrates suggests is the musical lover's (137a7), has shown neither what philosophy is nor how one would know when one has found it.

The musical lover assumed earlier in the discussion, that philosophy is both noble and good (133d5 ff.), and he later said that the philosopher should learn the noblest things, which he believed were the theoretical principles of the arts (135b ff.). Learning these things, however, seemed neither noble nor good for a human being. Socrates suggested that good human beings are generally understood to be of benefit to others because goodness implies usefulness to others (136b4 ff.). It was never made clear, however, whether the good human being is also useful to himself, nor whether the useful human being is simply good (cf. 136c3-5). But it would seem these questions can not be answered without answering what puts a human being in a good condition (cf. 134e7-8). By using certain well-chosen examples (the doctor and the pilot), Socrates was able to establish that so long as they followed the musical lover's argument, the philosopher is wicked and useless among humans (136e4). The upshot, then, is that the philosopher cannot be good and therefore is not noble. Moreover, philosophy comes to light as being useless and pointless, which apparently confirms the athlete's initial criticism of it (cf. 132b7-8).

While the result of the argument must come as an unpleasant surprise to the musical lover (136e6), who on every one of his views wanted philosophy to be the noblest thing, what is perhaps most puzzling about the whole affair is that Socrates has brought the argument's conclusion to light, i.e., that philosophy is <u>not</u> something "great and noble." This is strange.

Socrates now indicates, however, that he does not accept the argument's conclusion, and further implies that he has doubted the adequacy of the musical lover's argument all along (137b2-6). Why, then, has the philosoper allowed philosophy to be projected in such a low light? To begin to resolve this question, one must bear in mind that what has been investigated is the musical lover's argument about what philosophy is, and it is reasonable to presume that Socrates may be attempting to teach the musical lover something about himself and philosophy. Socrates has not expressly denounced this lover's motive -- his "great love of honor" (133a6) -- instead, he allowed for it to operate freely, unaffected by the shame exposure surely would have caused (cf. 134b4). Socrates has merely questioned the actual consequences of this motive. Philosophy is not learning many things, nor is the philosopher "serious about the arts." Socrates supposed such men are called "illiberal" (137b3-6). Moreover, by investigating these two definitions of what philosophy is, Socrates ensures that his own forthcoming proposal will be considered with them in mind. Implying that he may have been harboring a knowledge about what it is to philosophize, Socrates now takes the initiative in the discussion, and overtly rules it.

Socrates begins this discussion about philosophy by asking a series of startling questions about the punishment of animals. These questions are certainly odd and it is not readily apparent what they have to do with the discussion that has preceded them. Moreover, it is the strangeness of these questions that causes readers like Lamb to declare the dialogue to be spurious. Our immediate task, then, would seem to be to figure out why Socrates makes this strange turn to punishment. In attempting to figure out this turn, we see that punishment itself is not without precedent in this encounter if we notice that Socrates has been punishing the musical lover both for his impolitic arrogance toward nonphilosophers and for not appreciating his ignorance about what philosophy is. Thus we can see what the musical lover may not have seen: Socrates has ruled the discussion all along. Socrates begins to reveal his understanding of what philosophy is, or rather what political philosophy is, by speaking about punishment.

This turn to speaking about punishment, moreover, appears to be connected with the distinction the musical lover made between speech and deeds. We recall that the musical lover repudiated the athletic lover's life of deeds (132c4-6), and emphasized his own exclusive reliance on speech (134c1-4). Socrates' deed of punishing this lover for his presumption, however, may not have taught him anything other than a certain respect for Socrates' skill with speech and argument, even "rude" speech (136e6). Socrates' power of speech may even seem to confirm what the musical lover had said earlier about speech, i.e., the weaker speech can defeat the stronger (134c1-3). Ironically, Socrates has shown this to the lover who relies on speech by using his speech to repudiate his views about philosophy's nobility. The musical lover's own speech has been turned against him, and although he is dispirited by the argument's conclusion (136e6), he is forced to accept it. His own speech, in the mouth of an expert, has punished him. Perhaps the philosopher's speech about punishment may imply that speech and deed can be joined and thereby illuminate what he has in mind for the activity of philosophy. Socrates has, after all, just proposed that he might know what philosophy is. He prefaces his discussion by saying we'll "know with more certainty" that philosophy is not being serious about the arts, nor to live as a "busybody," "stooping down and learning many things." The musical lover will answer some additional questions. The apparent impertinence of these questions is what is so strange.

He begins by asking whether those who know how to punish horses correctly are those who make them best. And then, is it those who know how to make dogs better who also know how to punish correctly? If so, then "the same art makes them best and punishes correctly" (137c1-7). We should notice that Socrates' argument intimates that priority must be conceded to the improving art. That is, the art of making animals better or best is a higher art than its subsidiary art of correct punishment. Making better or best can also include, for example, the knowledge of how to reward correctly, about which Socrates is strangely silent. Punishment for the sake of bringing forth what is better or best implies a recognition of what is worse, and thus implies thought of the good.[72] Correct punishment can improve a nature;

[72] See Leo Strauss, What is Political Philosophy, p. 10.

improvement, in turn, implies thought of the good. The thought of the good appears to have formed the background for Socrates' first questions for he next asks whether that art -- "the art which makes them better and punishes correctly" -- is the same as the one which knows the good and the evil ones, and, moreover, whether the art which "makes humans best is the one that both punishes correctly and judges thoroughly the good and the evil" (137c9-d2). Socrates begins his discussion, then, by introducing an ascending hierarchy of knowledge: 1) the knowledge of correct punishment; 2) the knowledge of improvement; and, 3) the knowledge of good and evil.

The knowledge of good and evil superintends both improvement and correct punishment because one cannot be sure that one is punishing correctly or making others best, without having requisite knowledge of good and evil. Moreover, the naturally good condition of these beings is the end of both correct punishment and the improving art. Bruell elaborates on this, saying,

> it [the knowledge of making better] is more comprehensive and more fundamental than the knowledge of punishing correctly. Moreover, it is the proper link between the knowledge of punishing correctly and the knowledge of good and evil human beings: the concern of the punisher with improvement (and not, for example, with civic peace) is what makes it necessary for him to know the good and evil human beings.[73]

Socrates, however, does not indicate how the practitioners of the improving art have themselves acquired the requisite knowledge of good and evil. He simply points to its necessity. Furthermore, it is not clear whether those who have such knowledge are the ones who would bother to make men best, or actively punish to that end. One must remember that the issue is what is philosophy; is it directed exclusively toward knowing, or is some doing involved? Perhaps one can surmise that it may be enough for one to have knowledge of good and evil without having ever to apply such knowledge to improve or to punish others. The knowledge of good and evil itself may be what makes a human best, and allows him to judge the condition of others. We recall that Socrates first mentioned the good in conjunction with philosophy (133d2) in the course of subtly suggesting the need for a hierarchy of knowledge that corresponded to the hierarchy of things to be learned. He now confirms that there is a

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[73] Christopher Bruell, "A Socratic Introduction to Political Philosophy," p.5.

natural hierarchy of knowledge that ascends to the knowledge of the good. This natural standard of the good applies to one human being as well as many, and, conversely, it is the same for many human beings as well as one (137d4-5). That is, the "best" human nature is the standard which must be understood in order to understand one human or many.[74]

Socrates thus establishes a natural hierarchy: one cannot thoroughly understand many natures if one does not know the best nature, and it would seem that this is true for knowing "horses and all the others" (137d7). That is to say, the natural standard for an animal is the best of its species -- a homogenous standard which applies to all -- for the best is the standard in light of which all the others are judged. According to the dialogue, those who know how to punish correctly would need to know the "best" nature, but Socrates does not explicitly contend that those who have such knowledge would themselves be the best simply by virtue of it. Would one who properly applied such knowledge be even better? Socrates' words leave open the possibility that the "best" human plays no active role in improving by punishment or anything else. Perhaps we are to understand his deeds as a necessary supplement to his words. [75]

Socrates' questions about improving these natures (horses, dogs, human beings), and judging the best, is related to a question which emerged in the dialogue's first section when he wondered whom to ask about the things to be planted and sowed that put a human being in good condition (134e7-8). No one then knew whom to ask and we recall that Socrates' two interlocutors were in pain because of their inability to answer this question (135a8). The two experts on the body, i.e., the doctor (the one who improves by repairing) and the trainer (the one who improves by strengthening) seem to have a parallel here insofar as Socrates now says correct punishment can improve certain kinds of natures and put them in a good condition.

[74](see Republic, 504e).

[75]Consider George Anastaplo's observation that "Life would not be worth living among a people whose life is entirely unexamined; such a people would be little better than brutes. In the examination of others, furthermore, one learns what men are like, how they differ from and resemble one another -- and this, too, permits the inquirer better to see and, if need be, defend himself and help them. He may even learn what other men know." "Human Being and Citizen" in Ancients and Moderns, edited by Joseph Cropsey, (New York: Basic Books Inc., Publishers, 1964) p. 26.

Perhaps he is implicitly challenging these lovers to consider whether their own natures need improvement.

In discussing animals, Socrates looks toward nature for guidance as to what makes one best, whereas the musical lover has so far looked to the established conventions and common opinions for his guidance, e.g., the arts, reputation, honor. Which is to say, this lover, whatever his pretensions, remains a man of the cave. The musical lover's answers to Socrates' questions at this point in the discussion clearly imply that he agrees it is possible for humans to be made best, or at least made better. It is not clear, however, that he knows he is one of those who need to be improved (cf. 133b1-3) even though so far he has been served a helping of punishing speech from Socrates.

Socrates' discussion now moves to consider cities, where there is a somewhat different conception of good and evil. Socrates' movement to the cities, then, follows his discussion about improving others and judging the best in light of a hierarchy of knowledge that exists in nature. This hierarchy must be kept in view so as to understand what Socrates shall now say about judging good and evil in the cities.

In response to the philosopher's leading questions, the musical lover affirms that the knowledge/science that punishes the "unrestrained and the lawbreakers" is the judicial science, and it, and no other, is called justice (137d9-12). It is crucial to notice, then, that when Socrates begins speaking about punishment "in the cities," he ceases to speak about the improving art, or what makes humans best. Socrates thus subtly implies that what is crucial in the cities is a standard of good and evil established by the city's laws or conventions, which may not be identical with the natural standard of improvement or what makes humans best. Depending on the city's conventions, there might even be more than one standard of excellence (e.g., the law might explicitly acknowledge several classes of citizens). Perhaps we can infer from what Socrates has suggested that "legal positivism" is the standard by which those in the cities know good and evil writ large.

Socrates' previous discussion had looked to a natural hierarchy of knowledge to discern the best human nature. In political associations, presumably the natural habitat of

fully human beings, there is a melding of both nature and convention, necessary for cities to exist. That cities are the natural habitat of men suggests that the natural hierarchy of knowledge may be somehow evident in the law. After all, those who frame the law must look to something when deciding what is good for the city. This, in turn, reminds us of the political conception of the good, i.e., utility. In the best cases, at least, the legislators form law that promotes the common good, which suggests that law is more than legal positivism simply, but their conception of the common good is somewhat constrained by their considerations for what is good here and now. This points to a distinction between opinion about what is good in this or that place, and knowledge of the good, which exists in nature regardless of time and place.

Socrates' suggestion that the judicial science is justice appears to say at first that justice is simply conventional, i.e., justice is simply the result of human devising. However, Socrates' characterization of justice in the cities as something established by law might indicate that nature and convention together play a role in determining the legal positivism that cities seem to require.[76] That is, the justice that is peculiar to virtually every city may be based largely on convention and opinion,[77] but a city naturally needs justice to preserve its existence and promote the common good for its citizens. The existence of a city presupposes a shared system of justice among men who are concerned with the here and now. Regardless of whether the specifics of such a system are conventional, the need for it is natural. There is a natural standard for the common good (cf. 132d7) to at least this extent.

Those who practise the judicial science in the cities, however, "know the good and the evil by the same [art] as that by which they punish correctly" (137e1-2), and "he who knows one, knows many" (i.e., the whole citizen body; cf. 137e4). They tacitly claim to know the good and evil in or for human beings inasmuch as they assume they correctly punish them. To admit a lack of such knowledge would profoundly impugn the legitimacy of punishment. The consequences of such an admission would undermine the very foundations of the city,

[76]See Crito, 50b.
[77]An exception to this, of course, is the Republic's perfect "city in speech," which implements a natural standard of justice throughout.

bringing all its activity to a halt. An unrestrained philosophic questioning of the city's justice could well have the same consequence.

Socrates' move, then, from considering punishment that makes natures best, to punishment in the cities points to a possible discrepancy between two standards of goodness, both apparently vital to man. The difference is between the good human being simply and the good citizen, (i.e., the person who is useful from the perspective of the city and its laws.)

Socrates now asks three more strange questions. He asks whether if one were a horse, an ox,[71] or a dog, and one were ignorant of the good and wicked horses, oxen and dogs, would one also be ignorant of oneself, of what sort one is (137e7-13)? Upon the musical lover agreeing to this, Socrates then follows by asking,

> What else? When one who is a human being is ignorant of the good and evil human beings, isn't he ignorant of himself whether he is good or evil, since he is himself also a human being? (138a1-3)

According to Socrates, the musical lover "conceded" this last point. This is all very strange because Socrates has just pointed to the character of justice and good and evil in the cities. Why does he turn once again and ask questions about dumb animals?

The strangeness begins to evaporate, however, when we realize the peculiar character of these beasts: they have been, or are capable of being transformed when domesticated by human reason. Socrates was speaking about the effect of the judicial science's punishment on those in the cities; is he now tacitly likening humans in some respects to certain kinds of animals? However, his asking (in effect) whether these animals would be self-conscious about

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[71]The addition of the ox is curious. Perhaps because an ox is a castrated bull, we are to notice that the bull's transformation requires more than correct punishment. The bull's castration is most important in making it useful for humans. The drastic change in the bull's sexual nature ensures that it will not exercise its erotic power and squashes its spiritedness. The bull/ox, however, retains its natural strength which is directed to performing useful tasks for humans. Perhaps the otherwise "unrestrained" whom Socrates spoke of earlier are subject to a some kind of alteration of their erotic power, so as to force them to serve the city. On the other hand, the example of the ox may suggest a problem of understanding how a man's sexual eros is transformed (i.e., subliminated), so that it can be directed toward an erotic pursuit of higher things. (As was noted earlier, this is Pheidippides' education in the "Thinkery.") Although he is hardly a raging bull, the musical lover himself may be receiving an education from Socrates in distinguishing his erotic love for the boy from his confused erotic desire for higher things.

the punishment's effect on them, i.e., would each one know what sort one is, reminds us of the crucial difference between humans and animals. If animals were capable of self-consciousness they would also be capable of choosing their own ends, but because they lack self-consciousness, they can be used much more readily for someone else's ends. Therefore, Socrates' may be suggesting that humans who have been transformed by a city's laws are shaped primarily with a view towards making them politically useful, "good citizens" (which usually means, first of all, peaceful, "law abiding"), rather than towards making them the best human beings simply.

It is true that the goodness of certain animals is often understood to mean nothing more than their usefulness to us. A human nurture can alter the nature of certain animals, such as the three mentioned, but while human punishment can transform these natures so that they can perform tasks they would be unable to conceive of by themselves, these animals can never become more than their own natural limitations allow. Left alone, these animals would remain wild. No horse, ox, or dog actually wishes to be something other than what it is, nor does any animal consciously strive to be the best or noblest one of its species. Needless to say, no animal ever reflects on what is good or noble or just, nor wonders about "What is the best way of life for me, a horse's life, an ox's life, or the life of a dog?" Furthermore, no animal has a conception of anything being "great and noble."

Animals, then are "correctly punished" to make them conform to some notions of human utility and human morals. Nevertheless, it was implied in Socrates' discussion previous to the cities that there may be a natural standard that determines what is the best animal, a standard outside of the city, a standard beyond human utility. Whether this standard is higher or lower than that of the domestic beast, it is certainly different. For example, a wild mustang running free may be, to the human eye, an example of the most beautiful kind of horse, and one which exists simply for its own good, in contradistinction to a race horse that is bred to run fast on long skinny legs that are susceptible to breaking easily. There may be several human uses of these animals, e.g., war horse, work horse, and race horse, and thus several different domestic standards. Still, to put the horse to such uses cannot be understood

to be primarily for the horse's good. The sub-rational horse and dog may naturally tend toward their own good in their own natural setting and, in fact, there are certain natural kinds of punishments that can make a dog best. A mother dog will nip at her young to have them do certain things and the leader of the pack somehow manages to get first helpings of any of the food that is to be shared. It would seem, then, that the best animal from the standpoint of nature is the one who most nearly fulfills its potential to exist well (including propagate) in its natural setting.

The case of humans is generally more complicated than that of animals, and Socrates' well-chosen examples point to some of these complications. The ox reminds us of the difference between males and females. The best man may be importantly different than the best woman; similarly, the standard of good citizen may differ for males and females. As noted, men have several different uses for horses and dogs, and so treat them accordingly. A good war horse is not the best draft horse, much less a child's pony. And the qualities that make for a good guard dog are not identical with those of a good hunter or retriever. And once again this seems true of humans: the city needs a variety of kinds to perform the variety of tasks essential to a city.

It's the animals' lack of self-consciousness that sheds light on Socrates' turn to the cities and its multiple standards of domestic utility. We see the difference between man and animals in considering the city, where it is natural for men to live amid convention, and to be trained to obey laws. Unlike animals, who also can be trained to obey certain rules, human beings are capable of self-conscious reflection on what is the best way of life for a human being. They typically have opinions about what the rules ought to be. This perhaps illuminates why Socrates mentions "Know Thyself" in this portion of the dialogue (138a9-10). Socrates is speaking in the context of the city where it is natural for men to live and adopt certain conventions, but they can become self-conscious about this, and reflect on the extent to which the good citizen is also the good human being, and vice-versa.[79]

[79]Only in the "city in speech" of Plato's Republic would the distinction between good citizen and good human being collapse. In the Clouds, Aristophanes accused Socrates of not having reflected on the fact that men make laws, and, moreover, why he (Socrates) needs the city to philosophize.

As previously suggested, the question about what is the best way of life may be the ultimate question for a human being (cf.133d2). This question, however, can only be radically examined from a perspective above or beyond politics. Within a political setting, the possible answers are limited to one or another kind of political life, of the best citizen's life. It may occur to someone inquiring into such a question that the life of inquiry itself, the life devoted to pursuing knowledge about this and other apparently important matters, is itself the best life. This would further compel one to think to think about the setting in which one's activity takes place and where it's best facilitated.

Socrates' discussion would not have been complete if he asked only about horses, oxen, and dogs given their lack of self-awareness. So Socrates next asks whether a human being ignorant of good and evil human beings is also ignorant of himself since he is himself also a human being (138e1-3). A human being is capable of self-conscious reflection, and thus can choose his own ends. In a narrative observation, Socrates says the musical lover "concedes" this, but he has already given ample indication that he, like most of us, is far from knowing in the fullest sense what it is to be a human being (cf. 133b1-3). One's opinions about what a good human being is, in conjunction with opinion about what the good life is, will necessarily rule one's conduct; anyone who realizes this would prefer to replace those opinions with knowledge.

As already noted, the improving art Socrates spoke of earlier is both more comprehensive and more fundamental than the knowledge of correct punishment because improvement may also be effected by reward; the improving art would include as well, then, knowledge of correct rewarding. For some reason, however, Socrates speaks only of punishment. Punishment may be the most effective way of <u>stopping</u> one from doing something in particular, but it is not the most effective way to encourage one to do something in particular. This is well known by those who train horses and dogs. But for a human being, the awareness of improvement itself may be sufficient reward. A human being who is ignorant about his own activity and remains ignorant of that ignorance means he cannot know the good and evil in his own nature, and hence not fully understand his nature, let alone presume to know the

natures of others. The greatest reward for a human being may be the self-conscious enjoyment of his own good condition, but to be ignorant of his ignorance is a punishment he cannot be aware of.

From the political perspective, i.e., from the standpoint of conventional opinion and legal positivism, the one philosophizing could be seen as "babbling about the heavenly things and talking nonsense philosophizing" if he is not seen to be addressing the questions which are commonly regarded as important by human beings, most of whom are preoccupied with utilitarian concerns. However, Socrates' examples of domestic animals reminds us of a standard of good and bad that is beyond human utility, beyond political life. Thus the "correct punishment" such as would make a human best requires a thorough knowledge of good and evil, in light of which one sould see the inadequacies of the city's conception of good and evil, founded as it is on common opinions, not knowledge.[10]

Socrates' likening humans to domesticated animals tends to conceal as well as reveal the question about whether there is a natural standard of justice, above and beyond the "justices" of the cities. We must bear in mind, however, that Socrates is speaking about humans in the cities who have conformed to their city's laws and conventions. For most humans, and this includes what we've seen of the two lovers so far, the quest to know what natural justice is, is not a significant part of their daily lives, nor can it be. Most humans do not, and probably can not, live their lives doubting the standards of their city, much less the significance of their existence or the activity that makes up their existence. Were they to do so, their own lives would almost surely take on a completely different character, and cities might even collapse.[11]

The foregoing conclusion begins to shed some light on why Socrates now offers his own interpretation of the Delphic Oracle's "Know Thyself" to mean "practice justice and moderation" (138a10). We can understand his interpretation of the oracle on either of two

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[10]We all like to think we are aware of this distinction when we point out that while Hess may have been a good citizen of the Nazi regime, he was an abominable example of a human being. We therefore implicitly admit a natural standard for human goodness.

[11]The city's recognition of this is why Socrates faced capital charges.

levels: it may be understood (as the musical lover likely does) to be enjoying the practice of two virtues within a civic framework of legal positivism. Justice and moderation thus become civic virtues -- the Delphic Oracle, on Socrates' interpretation here, exhorts one to become a good citizen and learn to obey the city's laws. But the civic conception of these virtues, based as they are on mere opinions, point beyond themselves to the truth about them. Insofar as there is a significant disjunction, or tension, between the two levels of understanding, one who realizes this is confronted with the problem of fashioning a way of life that, so far as possible, is somehow reconciled with both.

It is significant that Socrates never mentions the soul in this section of the dialogue; he speaks to the musical lover about the punishment of humans as though they are nothing more than animals, i.e., animated by animal souls. Unlike animals, human beings can be exhorted to do certain things; human beings are very much influenced by praise and blame; in fact, they are often primarily ruled by such things. Animals are incapable of speech (logos) and thus are incapable of being improved by it, let alone of wondering about questions of greatest importance. Human beings have musical souls that are susceptible to the skillful use of music which can charm men and make them better, and leave its mark long after. Both humans and domesticated animals are susceptible to the tone of words, but only humans are also sensitive to the content and the context of the words. And since animals have no shame, they would not be embarassed by their inability to defend their views (cf. 134b4; compare 139a7-8). Moreover, mere animals cannot conceive of noble things nor do they perceive any longing to strive for completion. It is worth noting, then, that Socrates ceases to refer to these two youths as lovers in this section.

The distinctively human capacity for shame, including shame over one's ignorance, indicates that man is a moral being who does not have to be ruled by force. The human capacity for shame makes humans susceptible to receiving a peculiarly human nurture that employs the punishment of shame (and the reward of praise. In the city, one can be shamed into being a good citizen by public ridicule occasioned by not conforming to what the cities require of a good citizen (cf. 134b4). However, a nurture can also manipulate one's shame to

impress upon one that one is not fully self-conscious of what it would require to become a complete human being (139a6; cf. 133b1-3). The distinctively human capacity for shame, then, can lead one toward the noble or beautiful things once one becomes fully aware that one is lacking them. It could lead one to philosophy as well as civic virtue.

Thus humans are decidedly different from animals insofar as they have speech (logos) and shame. However, as was noted above, these two ways we are different from animals can still be used to domesticate us. It would seem, then, that Socrates' interpretation of the Delphic Oracle for the musical lover casts the two virtues of justice and moderation in civic terms, by merely exhorting one to become useful by being a good citizen, and by making these two virtues merely lower versions of the two excellences. But since we are aware that Socrates sometimes takes it upon himself to interpret the oracle himself, there seems also to be another way to understand the oracle and that is in light of the best natures. The oracle interpreted as an invitation to profoundly examine one's own ignorance leads one toward an understanding of excellence, or rather, toward what is best for a human being simply.

Socrates next presents an argument that can be roughly outlined as follows: Justice is knowing good and evil, and ignorance of good and evil implies not knowing oneself. Ignorance of oneself is more like immoderation than moderation, so knowing oneself is moderation. Therefore, justice is the same as moderation (138b5). Bruell elaborates on this, saying

> Justice, the science by which we know how to punish correctly, is the same as moderation, the science by which we know how to judge (diagignoskein) both oneself and others. Knowing whether one is good or evil, in other words, which requires the ability to judge others too in this respect, is not merely necessary to self-knowledge, but its core. Compare Charmides, 167a1-7. [82]

Socrates, however, makes no effort to help the musical lover see that practising justice and moderation might mean anything more than to be a law-abiding citizen. That is, he does nothing overtly that would undermine the young man's attachment to his own city, nothing which from the city's perspective could be interpreted as "corrupting the youth." Knowing oneself takes on the character of being a restraint on one's longings and desires, so as to be a more just and moderate man in the city. The just and moderate man on these terms is not

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[82] "On The Original Meaning Of Political Philosophy", p. 14.

concerned with, or moved by, a concern for knowing what is truly "great and noble." Such a man is not altogether different than the domestic animals Socrates spoke of earlier.

Socrates interprets the Delphic saying here to make the turn to political things by exhorting others to practise virtue, understood on the surface as simply equivalent to civic virtue. In the Apology, on the other hand, Socrates credits the words of the oracle as causing him to embark on a life-long pursuit to determine whether he was really the wisest man, as Chaerephon reported the god's priestess had pronounced him to be. Yet, ironically in the Apology too, Socrates provides a lower, civic interpretation of what the god at Delphi said, for he claims the god sent him to wake up the sleepy horse of the city and to exhort the citizens to virtue (Apology, 30e).

It is revealing, then, that Socrates' next movement in the discussion subtly indicates the limits on civic loyalty. He asks whether cities are well-managed whenever those who do injustice pay the penalty (138b7-8). The most well-managed city would be the one where those who did truly unjust things paid the penalty. Socrates now explicitly identifies the science he is speaking about to be political. When one man practises the political art, he is called king and tyrant and he manages the city by the kingly and tyrannic art.[13] The kingly and tyrannic art is the same as the former ones, ie., justice and moderation. And when one man manages the household correctly, he is called household manager and master, and he manages the house well by justice. Socrates summarizes this argument, saying,

> It looks like they are the same thing, then, a king, a tyrant, a political man, a household manager, a master, a moderate man, a just one. And it is one art that is kingly, tyrannic, political, masterful, economic, justice, moderation (137c6-9)

According to the argument, it looks like it is one man who practises one art.

It may seem curious that Socrates would identify this one man who practises the seven-fold art to be the culmination of this argument which was to prove that philosophizing is not being serious about the arts nor learning many things. For it now appears that anyone interested in improving himself must learn at least seven seemingly different things, which

[13]It is curious that Socrates makes no distinction between the king and the tyrant, which perhaps indicates that actual cities are ruled by legal positivism, much as Thrasymachus says they are (Republic, 339a), or as Hobbes himself said in making no distinction between the king and tyrant. (Leviathan, ch. 19, 29).

somehow comprise a single art. Socrates had earlier argued that the pentathlete was to be seen as no better than second best to the one who specializes. He now offers a version of the "heptathlete" of politics. Is such a man "great and noble"? If not, who is?

We have proceeded some distance in the argument, however, to arrive at this conclusion, which Socrates himself offers. Perhaps a recapitulation of Socrates' progress through this section of the discussion will help to clear the strange surface. Socrates began by wondering what made certain animals better or best, suggesting that punishment played a role. In the human case, we associate punishment with justice, and that justice in the cities is the law. The movement to this was marked by Socrates' ceasing to speak of improvement and what makes humans best. This was followed by Socrates' explicit introduction of the things that were characterized to be political. Thus, the final movement of this portion of the discussion was concerned with correctly managing the cities by punishing those who are unjust, culminating in the one man who practises the seven-fold art. Such a man attends to the business of correctly managing the city and his own household.

Whoever the possessor of this political art might be, he apparently actively practises the art, including subjecting others to the various forces available to political life and thereby bringing order to the whole by punishing the unjust. The political art, therefore, would seem to claim the right to comprehensive rule, exemplified in Socrates' summary of the seven-fold man practising the seven-fold art. The political art establishes the comprehensive framework within which all the activity of political life takes place. The establishment of such a framework implies an architectonic knowledge of what is requisite to arrange the various and diverse parts within political life so that each part fits in its proper place and plays its proper role. Such architectonic knowledge proceeds from an understanding of what is good for political life, which, in turn, implies knowledge of the good itself. But what has all this to do with answering the question 'what is philosophy?' Is this the "guess" about "what sorts of things can be learned," and "especially those which the one philosophizing must learn," which the musical lover (and most anyone else) would regard as the "noblest things" (cf. 135a6)? In which case, a true philosopher would be, first of all, a <u>political</u> philosopher, concerned first

of all to understand himself and his fellows and the human environment in which he necessarily lives, and how they may be improved.

This perhaps further suggests that it is the philosopher who is to rule in the city, for, as in the Republic, he would know best how to arrange political life so that each part is in its proper place and doing its proper work. In the Republic, justice and moderation are very similar, if not the same, and the same man could at once be a king and a tyrant as well as the household manager and despot in the autochthonous household. It would seem, then, that this seven-fold art of rule is possible in one man but only in the perfect "city in speech" where everything is arranged in a rank-order that is superintended by the architectonic knowledge of the good. Recall that we noted earlier that each art is incomplete and that even collectively the arts are incomplete, not being able to provide what is good for the completion of a human being. Socrates' introduction of the political art appears to solve the problem of what is required for the completion of both political life, and a human being.

However, to understand Socrates to mean actively practising the seven-fold art on a political level seems to lead to a massive problem. It would force the master of this art to involve himself in all these affairs. One would either be compelled to rule (Republic, 473d ff.), and have no time to learn these arts, or to learn these arts, and have no time to rule. Moreover, to conflate all these seven arts to the rational principles of art would lead, as in the Republic, to the expert's rule in the household, and thus its destruction (cf. 138e5)."[11] This was depicted by Aristophanes in the Clouds where he pointed out that if reason is to rule even the household, it may may be rational for a son to beat and punish his father. Such an extreme situation would actually destroy political life and thus philosophy.

This conclusion, however, is even more strange than the one Socrates brought to light which said that philosophy is wicked and useless. Why would Socrates work through another argument about what philosophy is only to reach a conclusion that shows the destruction of political life and thus the destruction of philosophy? We must understand Socrates' own argument to reveal something about philosophy that is inherently dangerous in its relation to

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[11]This theme is developed more fully in Book V of Plato's Republic.

political life.

It is fair to raise this issue at this point, because what happens immediately after Socrates' summary of the argument is the re-introduction of philosophy and explicit questions about the shameful and the noble. It is perhaps curious to note that what has been shown by Socrates in this section of the dialogue would not seem to shed any light on whether it is truly noble to philosophize, but this, of course, is not what Socrates had promised when he renewed the discussion. He was going to prove only that philosophy is not learning many things nor the serious study of the arts. Socrates himself supposed that such study is "illiberal" (137b6). However, it now appears Socrates was tacitly suggesting that a complete human being must know the seven-fold art, but it is perhaps even more curious that Socrates never mentions while proceeding to his explicit, and far more aporetic conclusion, that this is philososphy. This strange analysis of politics and punishment was undertaken by Socrates to show what philosophy isn't. Did it do that by tacitly showing what it is?

Given that Socrates speaks about these aspects of punishment with the musical lover, it may be worth considering whether he is attempting to improve this lover so that he can become best, or to have him pay heed to the city's customs, opinions, and conventions, or to have him attend to his own affairs. Socrates' discussion of punishment, and his effect on the musical lover, may begin to illuminate what he had in mind when suggesting that philosophy become more political. He transforms the discussion about philosophy into one about the overtly political, symbolized by a crucially important political thing: just punishment. Punishment that makes humans best is superintended by knowledge of good and evil; punishment in the cities, however, is usually in accordance with what ancestral or religious or some other authority has <u>said</u> is good and just. The two would be identical only in the perfectly just city; there, the opinions by which men are ruled would accord with knowledge of good and evil.

Socrates now explicitly returns to philosophy, asking whether it would be shameful for someone to be unable to follow or contribute when a doctor says or does something about the sick, and likewise, unable to speak or contribute whenever any of the other craftsmen is

involved but not shameful to be unable to follow or contribute when a judge or a king or any other of those they've just now gone through is involved (138d1-6). The musical lover is himself very impressed with Socrates' proof about what a man needs to learn to correctly manage a city. He replies enthusiastically that it would be most shameful to have nothing to contribute regarding such great matters (138d7-8). This, in turn, suggests that he may intuitively recognize the inherent importance or nobility of these different arts of rule, or rather, he may intuitively recognize the inherent nobility of self-rule, ruling one's household, and ruling in the city. After all, there is something inherently and immediately attractive about rule by the noble. His eagerness about the political art, in turn, may reveal that his own nature is strongly attracted to the things in the cave. That is, his great love of honor, his attempt to place himself above the athlete, his concern for the reputation of philosophy, his enthusiasm for Socrates' discussion of politics, all indicate that he is as drawn to the political realm as to philosophy, for he seeks this honor within a conventional framework.

Socrates apparently convinces the musical lover that he must attend to the affairs of his own household first (138e1-6), and that when his own household is put into a good condition, then, if asked, he can help his friends and perhaps the city as well. The seven-fold man has apparently already come to light as the one who rules either the city or himself. But Socrates' question also raises the possibility that the political association as normally conceived is not self-sufficient in that it needs knowledge of the good and the just, and not mere opinions about them, if it is to be "well-managed."

Perhaps philosophy would be looked to for help in the actual direction of political life, which itself is not so difficult to conceive. A striking example is modern political life which endorses the authority and rule of modern science. Modern natural science, however, is unable to answer the question about whether it is itself good or whether it promotes what is good in its relentless pursuit to command nature and put her to work for human beings. Modern science is the pervasive intellectual authority of modern political life. It does not stand outside of itself and judge itself, however, nor does it stand outside of the political community and judge it. Mastering nature is simply assumed to be good for human beings.

But one must first know what is good for a human being, which requires that one first know human nature (138e1-6). Socrates thus has suggested a perhaps most important kind of punishment, where one "punishes correctly himself" and puts his own household in a good condition. For it would seem ludicrous to assume mastery over nature unless one were able to be the master of one's own nature, which requires that one know one's nature.

This, however, may cast Socrates' earlier discussion about punishment in a different light. Perhaps what he has said about punishment in nature and the cities has an analogue in the human soul. That is, we can conceive of punishing certain parts of us by simply repressing the appetites or demands the body makes, perhaps corresponding to punishing the unjust or those who break the city's laws. On the other hand, perhaps the best part of us must be unfettered by anything except the impulse to strive for excellence, or to be in the company of it, which requires that one know what it is as judged by the natural standard of the best.

So as well as shaming him into an acknowledgement of his own ignorance (thus tempering his arrogance), Socrates is also exhorting the musical lover to become a good citizen, but to do so by attending first to his own business in the context of the city, and by becoming more self-conscious of what is required of him to fulfill his civic duties. Socrates now concludes his discussion with the musical lover by saying that philosophizing "is far from being much learning or preoccupation with the arts."

Socrates recounts that having said these things, the "wise one" was ashamed at what he had said earlier and now became silent; but the ignorant one (the athlete) said that it was so; and the others (a group consisting of at least the two young boys) praised what had been said. At this point, having said these things, Socrates apparently chose to end the discussion; in any case, this ended the narration of it to his companion or companions.

VI. Conclusion

Socrates' discussion with the two lovers concludes with his assertion that philosophizing is not much learning nor a preoccupation with the arts. He recounts to his audience that the "wise one" was ashamed, the athlete, however, agreed with what had been said, and the others praised the discussion. There are, however, three things about Socrates' concluding statement that are very curious: 1) he had concluded earlier that philosophizing is neither much learning (134d12) nor a preoccupation with the arts (136e1-3), and then reiterated this same conclusion prior to renewing the discussion on his own initiative (137b2-6). Why, then, would he set himself the task of proceeding through another discussion of philosophizing only to reach the same conclusion? 2) Socrates' conclusion is a negative one: that is, he himself never expressly answers whether it is noble to philosophize as we may have expected or even hoped for given that this question began the discussion and was primary to it. Nor, for that matter, does he ever say what it is to philosophize. This is all very strange given that the explicit discussion abounds with questions about the nobility of philosophy and its character and purpose. 3) Socrates' negative conclusion at the end of his discussion has answered only two of four things he ostensibly had set out to refute: he had also emphasized that the one philosophizing is not a "busybody" nor does he "stoop" down (137b5). Why, then, does he not address these two things as well in his explicit conclusion? Having made these observations, one can say that Socrates' conclusion raises more questions than it appears to answer.

The dialogue began with two boys involved in a dispute about philosophy. Socrates withheld from an athlete his conjecture about the subject of the boys' dispute; he did, however, explicitly suggest their activity to be "great and noble." Philosophy is a controversial subject and Socrates impresses this upon his audience right from the beginning of his narration. Socrates' circumspect approach toward the athlete suggested that philosophy must present itself in a politic manner. The explicit discussion about philosophy began when the athlete denounced the boys' dispute to be useless and pointless, utterly divorced from human affairs. He did not regard philosophy to be great and noble. The musical lover, the one

experienced in speech, alleged that the athlete was incapable of forming a credible opinion about philosophizing because he had spent his whole life as a lowly athlete. A contest was thus set up between deeds and speeches.

Political philosophy naturally emerges when one is motivated to examine any two fundamentally different ways of life, such as the life of athletics or the life of music, and ask: "What is the best way of life?" This question, however, presupposes a prior question: what causes one to wonder about what is the best way of life? Wondering about what is the best way of life is a peculiarly human activity, asking peculiarly human questions about human affairs. Our opinions about our experience generally lead to confusion when they are subjected to radical questioning. The musical lover's experience with Socrates attests to this fact. It is only by way of thoroughly examining the opinions of the athlete and the musical lover that we come to understand what their answer to the question is.

In order to involve the athlete and the musical lover in this discussion, Socrates deferred to their opinions to begin his examination of whether it is noble to philosophize. To clarify whether much learning is noble, Socrates asked whether philosophizing is itself good for a human being (133d2), pointing to a need for a rank-ordering of knowledge culminating in knowledge of the good. But where does one look to find the things to learn that put a human being's soul in a good condition? The musical lover suggested that the soul's good condition would consist in having comprehensive knowledge of the arts, but Socrates showed that such a man would be useless among humans, and presumably neither good nor useful for himself as well. On his own initiative, then, Socrates proceeded to speak about acts of punishment that make humans better or best, culminating in one man practising one seven-part art. It was observed that Socrates never explicitly identified this to be philosophy.

Socrates then shamed the musical lover into recognizing that he had neglected to attend to the most important business of putting his own soul and household in a good condition. We therefore have one more question: what puts the soul in a good condition? Again, the dialogue doesn't seem to directly answer this question. But it is in light of this question that all the other questions of the dialogue rise to the surface. Which is to say, this

is the question that focusses the other questions the dialogue poses.

Socrates' logos points to the study of human affairs and to what emerges eventually as the most important and attractive subject for a human being: the soul (cf. 138e4-7). Socrates' discussion about rational politics with the musical lover revealed that the direction of one's own affairs or the direction of human affairs in general, can lead to a state of confusion, such as the rule of reason in the family, which can even harm the phenomena when not guided by human prudence. Studying the nature of the soul enables one to see the limits of reason in actual political life. Although the political philosopher is competent to give advice about actual politics, as Socrates proves in his discussion of political punishment, this does not seem to be his foremost concern nor is it what motivates him to philosophize.

According to the dialogue, the "political" philosopher's activity is to account for the whole, beginning with the study of his own soul (138e1-7), and afterwards, if he is asked, perhaps to become involved in the affairs of the city (138e8-139a2). Socrates' logos in the dialogue articulates what is important and essential for a human being to know. Political philosophy is the act of elaborating the comprehensive framework in light of the fundamental alternatives (for example, natural philosophy 132a5-b1, the poetic life 1335a3, and the statesman's life 133c4) that a human being needs to know in order to determine the best way of life. The account of the whole must address the most important questions for a human being. But the very activity of accounting for the whole requires that that activity account for itself and its own motivations, i.e., philosophy must account for its own activity and ask whether it is good (133b2). The Erastai is a reflexive look at philosophy.

Socrates is displayed as a model for philosophy insofar as others see philosophizing as being a way of life. He comes to light apparently living a life that begins by having one first reflect on the desire to question the nobility of his own activity (compare 132b7-8 with 138e-139a3). Socrates is not shown only to make the content of philosophy political, rather, or more especially, he takes a political approach to the question of the worthiness of philosophizing as a way of life. Socrates spoke of the "measured" amount of learning that is good for a soul, intimating that there are different amounts for different souls. We recall that the

"wise" one was ashamed having learned that he did not know what it is to philosophize (cf.133b1-3); the "ignorant" one acquired a certain respect for the worthiness of philosophy's political concerns; and the "others" praised Socrates' rule of the discussion. Socrates served a measured amount of speech to the different natures he was addressing, but their own helping was determined as much by what their natures were fit to receive. In coming down from the heavens, the philosopher takes his place as the true educator of human beings, i.e., the one who can make others "better" or "best" concerning questions that are crucially important to human beings (cf. Republic, 521b).

Socrates never speaks explicitly about the heavenly things, instead he pays serious attention to human affairs and exhorts the others to do the same. This was not an education the boys in Dionysius's school had received prior to Socrates' entrance. This, in turn, may cast aspersions on Dionysius who is ostensibly the teacher of these boys. However, it is reported that the earlier philosophers of nature did not themselves manifest concern for human affairs in their pursuit. They wanted to know the nature and causes of all being, but ignored the human being. This leads one to suspect that there may very well be embedded in the Erastai a Socratic criticism of an open and unrestrained investigation of nature that is simply deleterious to political life.

The Erastai, however, causes us to consider the possibility that Socrates himself may have been concerned about the same things as previous natural philosophers. Although the examination of one's soul emerges in the dialogue as the proper place to begin one's philosophical examination, the philosopher seeks to have comprehensive knowledge about our larger natural setting, the cosmos. One is inevitably required to turn back to the study of the heavenly things, far beyond the framework of legal positivism in the cities, to judge what is best in nature. Socrates' political defense of philosophizing, however, is seen to investigate justice and moderation. Socrates' explicit investigation of justice and moderation, however, seemed to be for the sake of presenting philosophy respectably, exhorting others to lead more virtuous lives. It is possible that Socrates' political presentation of philosophy also serves to protect and enhance the reasonable possibility of the philosophic investigation of nature

within the context of the city. The dialogue does not answer this but pointed to it when Socrates earlier formed an opinion about what the boys' dispute was about and characterized it, perhaps ironically, as being "great and noble." Calling the boys' astronomical/ philosophical dispute "great and noble" is the only thing which Socrates never explicitly refutes. It therefore remains a question whether looking up to the heavens or stooping down to investigate the things beneath the earth is "great and noble." Would the philosopher turn back to the study of the heavenly phenomena, or has Socrates shown that there is another way to study them, a way that could be called "great and noble," a way that would fulfill the expectations of the two boys whom we first saw in dispute?

The dialogue points to the study of the soul as the most important concern for a human being. The study of the soul begins out of a profound sense of shame about one's ignorance over the most important question for a human being: what is the best way of life for a human being (cf. 133b3; compare 132b5-6)? Knowledge of one's own soul is requisite to put it in a good condition. The pursuit of the soul's good condition is motivated by a profound sense of shame and discontent with the presumption that one knows one is living the best life. Lovers of wisdom are ashamed of their lack of knowledge about what makes a human being truly wise; ironically, in their striving to become fully self-sufficient human beings, they love something which they can never completely have. Philosophizing itself must be accounted for, it must examine its own motivations, to establish itself as a way of life, and perhaps to benefit others so they can benefit themselves.

The dialogue, however, does not present what could be seen as a discussion about the nature of the soul. It shows political philosophy to originate out of a passion to find what is the best way of life for a human being. But this, in turn, may be the soul's highest activity and the most important activity for a human being. The one who knows himself has reflected on his own soul's activity and therefore on the activity of souls. He may well be the elusive expert on the soul. The reflection on the fundamental human alternatives and the consideration of human lives would enable one to judge the best human nature, and thus to be able to judge what activities are "great and noble." It would seem, then, that if one hasn't

reflected on the nature of one's own soul, one would know no more about what one was doing than the two boys who caught Socrates' eye when he first walked into the school.

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